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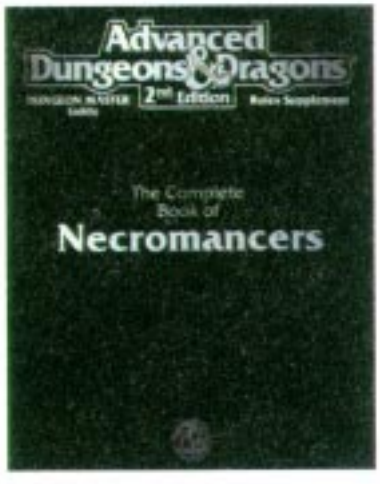

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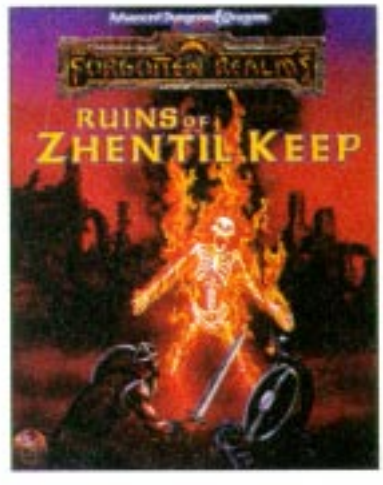

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COVER

A thief trying to make his way over the garden wall gains a moment's respite thanks to the artist's daring use of "MAGIC TAPE." The ogre mercenary appears sufficiently diverted by the sticky situation, but can the thief gain the upper hand? Or will the artist give him the brush-off?

Cover artist Larry Smith says his plans are more than just a little sketchy on this point.

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Now don't think we didn't have anything else to do. . .

Editors' note: Sometimes we make up stuff for our April Fool's edition every year. But to fill the "Letters"page, we don't have to. These are real letters—honest—that we really received from people who really wrote them and were really serious about what they had to say. The letters are printed exactly the way they were written, except that the names of the writers have been withheld, which we thought was a really good idea.

Dear Dragon,

HELP! I realy need some help, on a problem. I've been a DM for almost a year, I've created my own world, my own monsters, my own spell books, and all that stuff. But theres one thing that I just don't know how to create, er . . . roll up. Death. I know this sounds funny, but I need your help.

Would you give me the statistics for Death? (Please, oh Pleas, oh Please!) Like how many hp Death has, what magic powers it has, what does it have magic powers or does it have spells or what. I'd be realy thankful if you helped out.

Dear Dragon,

I have an evil wizard named Casimir who has a *ring of regeneration*. If he cut off his finger which has the *ring* and he didn't die would the finger grow a new body? If so could he create an army of clones that would do what he says?

P.S. Casimir is about to become the new Blue Dragon Highlord (taking Kitiara's place after she dies) so you better start printing his statistics.

Dear TSR,

A friend and I while arguing a point while elves or dwarves have better eye sight. (Now don't think we didn't have anything else to do although we really did not). Went to a friends house to see what race indeed had the better eye sight and also to see who was going to make fun of the other over this whole issue. I don't know how we did it but we kind of stumbled on an idea for a game system and we decided to take this idea (me and my other 2 friends) and take it further well any ways the idea is still here floating around and we still don't know who has the better eye sight elves or dwarves. Well the purpose of this letter is to ask you if you are really interested in an idea for a game system that might be a little expensive but we really think it would sale if given the chance. If you find time in you're busy schedules please write back to me at the address which is at the bottom of this letter. Oh and if you can also be so kind as to answer the question that we are all urging to find the answer to (which race has the better eye sight Elves or Dwarves?) we would really be happy.

Dear Dragon,

In one of my adventuring groups I have a magic user (level 35) that wants tenth level spells and I have allowed this by making the most powerful spell *Genie's Wish* which is where you cast it properly there are no ill effects to the caster (but 20% chance it will have ill effects on the wisher, the magic user cannot wish). I have also placed other limits including cannot have more then one tenth level spell at a time, takes 1 full day to memorize but they still abuse it. Can you give me some advise other than getting rid of tenth level magic all together?

Dear: Dragon

What hapens to pc that have a baby?

To whom it may concern:

I've created a do it yourself dance course viz: If You Can Read, You Can Dance. Its so simple, a teenager can learn.

I'm looking for a publisher to buy it out right. Millions can be made if advertised on T.V.

I shall send a section of my dance course, and a comparative competitor's version to prove the simplicity of mine.

Dear Dragon,

I am a big fan of Drizzt Do'Urden's! I myself feel he is the best swordsman, not only in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, but in all of the other campaign settings as well! I have a friend who strongly disagrees with me! He is a big fan of Rikus, from the DARK SUN® setting! He seems to think that Rikus, in battle with Drizzt, would kill Drizzt! Now I'm pretty sure most people will agree with me when I say, "No man or woman is a match for the whirring scimitars held by the mighty Drizzt Do'Urden!" (I'm sorry Mr. Greenwood but I dont think even the great Elminster would have a chance!) So it would be appreciated if you could please answer my dilemma so I could shut my friend up once and for all!

Dragon,

It seems, unless you have gotten word from the artist, that you jump to conclusions when it comes to the situation on the cover of issue 209. You say "... a cleric leans over to aid a fallen comerade, much to the chagrin of the rats nearby who had other plans for the men." It's obvious that the rats are hostile to the cloaked man, but nothing shows them to be malicious. Maybe the fallen cleric or mage was a follower or a lawful deity, for example, and had the enlistment of the rodents as defenders of the temple, where the purple-robed cleric held a magical key, an artifact which had been kept in the temple for generations. When an opposing cleric trespassed inside the temple, the rats attempted to warn the temple's keeper, but he was busy in meditation. Summoning power from a brass rod of great power, the offending cleric absorbed the keeper's life energy in one backstabbing attack. The cleric never saw the attack coming, and he collapsed on a table as the enemy cleric pilfered the magical glowing key from the fresh corpse. The rats, crushed and furious at the loss of their lifelong friend and keeper, attempt to avenge his death, while the cleric readies his glowing rod to defend himself with.

Animals, even those magically bestowed with a spark of intelligence, are rarely "evil." If we just take a look at the world from their perspective, maybe we will stop the kind of pre-judging that causes disgusting things to happen, like the slaughtering of dragons who were simply trying to defend their young.

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Editorial

Women on the Verge

*. . . **but as a writer one has to take the chance on being a fool. . .***

Yes, to be a fool, that perhaps requires the greatest courage.

Anne Sexton

When Dale asked me to write an editorial about women and role-playing games, that little voice inside my head was saying, "No, don't do it, you'll only set yourself up for criticism." It took the better part of my day, paging through back issues of DRAGON® Magazine, to read all the letters from women in the "Forum" section. Women seem to have a lot of complaints as well as compliments about role-playing games. True, we are less likely to buy products with scantily clad women on them, after all, not all of us are shaped like ***Playboy*** centerfolds. And yes, we sometimes get outraged when we see women who are supposed to be warriors wearing next to nothing. But aside from those issues, many women enjoy role-playing, run their own game campaigns, work in hobby shops, and write fantasy, science fiction, and horror stories and novels.

I never realized that some women felt alienated and discriminated against until I began reading their comments. The abundance of letters clearly shows that female gamers are not a rarity. Women who want to get involved in RPGs but can't seem to find anyone interested should start their own campaign, post flyers on bulletin boards at the local college or university, or ask friends if they would be interested in playing. Most college campuses have gaming clubs and people of all races, creeds, and colors participate.

Equality is an issue in everything these days. People shouldn't expect to be treated differently simply because they're female, African-American, skinny, or have purple hair. We all have to learn to look past our differences, and understand that no one is being singled out because of some minor difference. The idea behind any game is enjoyment and imagination. If a company's product or ideas anger you, write a letter to let the company know. Voicing your anger leads to change, and the best way to achieve any type of equality is to let your voice be heard and don't let the big boys intimidate you. Discrimination is sad regardless of where you find it, but it is simply a fact of life and something that we must deal with. If you feel like you're being left out on game night maybe it's because people don't think you're interested. Let them know that you are, and it'll open up a whole new world of adventure. If gaming sessions turn into the dating game, speak out—don't assume they know, or that they act that way because you're female. Don't play up the differences, stick to the similarities, because you don't have to be one of the guys to enjoy the game.

I read a letter (in issue #177) from a woman who said that her mere presence generated stares in a comic-book store. In my own experiences, I have never run into any problems in comic/hobby shops. Most people welcome new players and are more than happy to teach them the rules. The easiest way to overcome your fears is to just jump in and play. Sit in on a few sessions until you get the hang of it, ask questions, and become involved. You'll make some great friends and have a good time. Guys, keep in mind that the women in your role-playing group are not there to be picked up, they want to play the game. Becoming a good role-player has nothing to do with gender.

At one time there was a lack of strong fictional female characters. Lately it seems that the media is picking up on this and is portraying women in a new light. Just tune ***in*** to ***Star Trek: Voyager*** or ***The X-Files,*** rent videos like ***Aliens*** or ***Terminator*** *2.* When I was growing up the only fictional females I wanted to be like were Princess Leia and the Bionic Woman. When I was in college I discovered ***the*** comic book, ***Grendel.*** The main character, Christine Spar, was a single mom, and an independent, strong woman (she also kicked some serious butt!). Now, young women have a wide variety of fictional females to base role-playing characters on.

Other examples of strong female characters can be found in TSR, Inc., products. The DRAGONLANCE® Saga has Goldmoon and Cymbelene, and The Simbul (Queen of Aglarond) is just one of many influential women of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Granted, you may have to search for fictional role models, but women have not been passed over, and the gaming world is slowly realizing this. I've noticed that more women role-play now than ever before. Maybe it's because of the growing number of women writers or the fact that a variety of games are now available to suit almost everyone's needs. I know a group of women who play West End Games' STAR WARS* RPG very week, and others who play White Wolfs VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* game. Men also are becoming more open to the idea of women gamers (if they weren't already). Games are meant to bring individuals together, not separate them

Women need to discover their own voices, and not just in fantasy, science fiction, and horror. Women writers are growing in numbers, and the majority of them are excellent story tellers. If you want to write, pick up a copy of ***Writing a Woman's Life*** by Carolyn G. Heilbrun, it will point you in the right direction,

I love opening the mail here and finding an adventure proposal or letter from a woman, I only wish that more women would write. It is difficult to stand up and be heard in a man's world, but with support and effort it can be done. Please start writing and playing! Our road to equality is not paved, but we can make it smoother as we travel.

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FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc.'s Audio CD Introduction to Role-playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences in the hobby.

The ultimate act of defiance

by William W. Connors

You kids have got it easy! In my day, when we wanted to game we had to walk 20 miles, uphill both ways, in the pouring rain, through the bad part of town, until we came to only hobby shop within 100 miles that carried role-playing games. Then, if we knew the secret password, they'd let us in and maybe, just maybe, the owner would let us look at the games instead of having his gorillas beat us up and throw us out in the mud.

Well, alright, maybe it wasn't that bad. I mean, I never actually got beat up by gorillas. But the fact remains that these days, it's not too hard to get involved with role-playing games. After all, they're on the shelves of almost every major bookstore or well-stocked hobby dealer. Many schools have RPG clubs and games like the MAGIC: THE GATHERING* card game have introduced large numbers of people to the concept of fantasy games. When I started gaming, this just wasn't the case.

Like a lot of people in those days, I got involved in gaming after I discovered that I could routinely beat everyone in my family and chess club at ***Risk.*** "There must be more," I thought, "for a would-be global despot to do with his time."

Somewhere, don't ask me where, I had stumbled across mention of something called war games, I didn't know what they were, but they sounded like a step in the right direction. Determined to make something of myself, I sought out the largest hobby store in the area and boldly stepped in.

Only then did it dawn on me that I really had no idea what I was looking for.

I flagged down one of the fellows working behind the counter and asked him about . . . war games. I suppose that I half-expected him to laugh at me or throw me out of his shop. Self-confidence was not my big thing in those days. To my surprise and delight, he did neither. Instead, he introduced himself (his name was Rob Caswell) and asked me if I'd ever heard of role-playing games. I said no, we struck up a conversation, and before long I found myself invited to attend a gaming session the very next day. Not knowing that it would change my life forever, I thankfully accepted.

I arranged for my father to drop me off at the game. I told him that I'd call him when I needed a ride home and knocked on the door. To say the least, I was very nervous about meeting a whole bunch of new people.

To my surprise, everyone was friendly and eager to welcome an outsider into their long-established group. (It wasn't until later that I learned the truth of the matter: they had started gaming exactly one week before!)

The game of the day was a brand new release from Fantasy Games Unlimited called the STARSHIPS & SPACEMEN* game. As an avid reader of science fiction, I was delighted.

The referee, a fellow by the name of Larry Smith (not the one who works for DRAGON® and DUNGEON® Magazines), was an incredible game master. To this day, I haven't met his like. He was able to incorporate countless elements from books, television shows, and movies without blinking. I found myself running a vulcan armed with a variable sword and wearing the same powered armor I'd read about in Robert Heinlein's ***Starship Troopers.***

It was all there, everything that I'd read about and dreamed about for years! The only difference is that I was writing the story. My decisions were vital to the outcome of the story. It was incredible.

Years (and countless games) later, I still remember the details of that game as if it had happened only yesterday. We were exploring an alien base in the Altair system that was loosely based on the Krell city in the movie ***Forbidden Planet.*** The main difference was that this place was dangerous! I found myself cutting down triffids with my variable sword and carefully outwitting infrared-targeting automated lasers. There were lots of logic puzzles to solve, bad guys to zap, and treasures to be claimed.

Finally, we decided that it was time to call a halt for the day. I looked up at the clock and saw that it was 4 o'clock in the morning. The game had started at noon and it seemed like we had only been playing for an hour or two.

Larry offered rides home to those of us who were too young to drive and half an hour later I was back home. My father was still awake, watching TV, and about as mad as I'd ever seen him. Only then did I remember that I'd said I would call when I needed a ride home. He'd been up all night waiting for my call and I had forgotten all about it.

I tried to explain, but it didn't do much good. My father and I didn't get along so well in those days. His final words on the matter were "You'll never do that again!"

I spent the next few days trying to soothe dad's ruffled feathers and eventually managed to get his initial decision reversed. When next week's game rolled around, Sub-Commander Pa-Kur was there, ready to rock.

I think I knew from that first game that this was going to be more than a hobby to me. Indeed, of the five or six people who attended that game session, three of us have gone on to publish gaming material. Larry did some work for FGU, Rob has done art for GDW's TRAVELLER*, West End's STAR WARS*, and other SFRPGS, and I'm with TSR, Inc., now.

I'm sure there's a lesson in proper parenting and discipline somewhere in this story, but I'm just not sure who it's for—me or my father.

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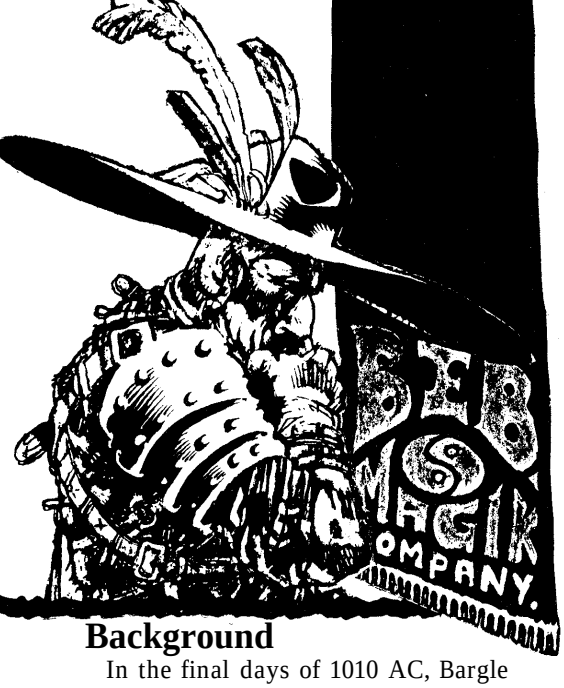

Background

In the final days of 1010 AC, Bargle the Infamous left his post as magist to Baron Ludwig von Hendriks, taking with him the baronial treasury. The cunning wizard had long since seen the proverbial writing on the wall, and when Hendriks was defeated by forces of the Five Shires, Bargle took the opportunity to move on to bigger things.

Shortly before the outbreak of the Great War that ravaged the Known World, Bargle had enjoyed some financial success by mass-producing self-help books on a magical printing press of his own design. Using the money stolen from the treasury, he founded the BeB Magic Company in Darokin City and hired several wizards as assistants to try the same approach with magic rings and rebound left-over copies of his books. His primary marketing hook was that all these items were "limited editions" that were valuable for that reason alone.

By early 1012 AC, BeB exploded onto the scene with an advertising blitz throughout eastern Brun. Known World or MYSTARA® player characters can't help but encounter BeB Magic Company products and sales representatives.

Item descriptions

If PCs seek out a BeB representative (or if one seeks them out—adventurers with bulging pockets attract them like flies to honey) he describes the Bargle limited editions in the most glowing of terms. He emphasizes the novelty and uniqueness of these rare magical treasures. ("Even the Emperor of Thyatis doesn't own a Bargle ring!") If pressed by a pragmatic PC, he even tries to come up with practical uses for the rings, not always an easy feat. He never mentions flaws with the items, as he is often not even aware they exist. The books are self-selling . . . or not, depending on the PCs' disposition and sense of humor.

Prices are listed below, both for complete sets and individual rings. Unnumbered rings may be had individually, although only in extremely limited numbers, the salesman will claim, although this is untrue; Bargle has been making ***rings of destruction*** for the Iron Ring for years. Rush deliveries cost 6,000 gp extra. It is therefore possible for the characters to encounter certain Bargle rings as part of a defeated villain's treasure.

Rings

The gargle Magical Ring Collection: Series One sells for 66,499 gp and Series Two sells for 54,199 gp. ("You couldn't get it cheaper if you raided a treasure hoard!") However, as is true with all collectibles, price doesn't necessarily reflect utility.

Each ring has a serial number between 1-50 engraved on the inside, as well as other engravings as noted. If a PC purchases or otherwise acquires a complete set, each ring in that set will bear the same number. It also is possible for characters to encounter rings of any type with no marks at all—Bargle had made several before coming up with the gimmick of limited-edition runs.

For purposes of dispelling, the rings from the ***Bargle Magical Ring Collections*** range in effectiveness from 18th to 27th level (1d10 + 17). 18th level represents the least powerful of Bargle's assistants, 27th level is Bargle himself. Rings in a set were not necessarily enchanted by the same wizard, so the DM must roll individually for each. Special conditions are noted in the descriptions.

Set #1

Invisible ring: This plain gold band is inscribed with the words "Invisible Ring!" When worn, it becomes invisible. That's it, Sparky. The ring has no other function. ***Dispel magic*** at any level makes the ring visible again (if you care). Cost: 1,000 gp.

Ring of destruction: This iron ring inflicts 1d6 points of magical damage per hour on the wearer until dead. Once death has occurred, the ring continues to inflict damage until the subject is at -20 hit points, at which time the corpse turns into a fine, chalky powder. Nothing short of a ***wish*** can restore the individual to life if this occurs. A ***dispel magic*** or ***remove curse*** cast at any level is the only way to neutralize the ***ring of destruction*** before the body becomes dust. Cost: 30,000 gp.

Ring of the eagle: Made from black onyx, this ring allows the wearer to ***polymorph*** (as per the wizard spell, ***polymorph self)*** into a black eagle, once per day for up to six hours. This item was originally commissioned by Baron von Hendriks (as the "Ring of Black Eagle".) He possesses the only one that will be found outside the collector's sets. Cost: 10,000 gp.

Ring of fashion: When commanded with the proper word ("snappy," as engraved on the inside of the ring,) this plain silver band replaces whatever the user is wearing with any desired outfit short of true armor. The clothes last until dispelled or the command word is uttered again, at which point the wearer's original garb returns. This device will not function if any type of armor is worn, and cannot produce any clothing that improves the wearer's armor class. Cost: 20,000 gp.

Note: One in six of the collector's edition ***rings of fashion*** are faulty, due to their rushed production. Faulty rings have a 5% chance of dressing the user in a garish jester costume that lasts for 1d4 rounds. It then vanishes, leaving the wearer stark naked. Whatever clothes that were worn (including magical girdles, boots, cloaks, hats, etc.) are lost forever. Small pieces of jewelry, such as rings, are not affected. The faulty ring loses its enchantment after malfunctioning.

Ring of ideas: Made from tempered steel, the ***ring of ideas*** enables the user to focus his mind (with a successful Intelligence check) and come up with an excellent idea (provided by the DM) relevant to the situation at hand. It has six uses. Cost: 8,000 gp.

Note: The ***ring of ideas*** is the most unreliable of all items created by Bargle. Each time it is invoked, there is a 35% chance the user will be ***confused*** and ***feebleminded,*** as per the wizard spells. Only ***cureall*** or ***wish*** can reverse the effects.

Set #2

Ring of circular curses: This ring is usable only by spell-casting characters. A single band looped twice and inscribed with "Power to Curse," it lets the wearer cast ***curse*** ld4 times per

day. However, the curse will affect the caster as well as the target. Cost: 50,000 gp.

Ring of gender confusion: This gold ring, set with a large red stone is inscribed with "It's a Question of Self-Image." When it is put on, the wearer thinks his sex has been changed to the opposite gender. However, this is just a ***delusion*** (as per the potion); those around the wearer will correctly claim that she is the same gender as always. The effected character will remain firm in his (her?) belief until subjected to a successful ***dispel magic.*** Cost: 10,000 gp.

Ring of impact: This brass ring gives +1 bonus on the wearer's attack and damage rolls during hand-to-hand punching attacks. It also gives +1 to the target's knock-out check. (The optional hand-to-hand combat rules can be found on page 111 on the D&D® game's ***Rules Cyclopedia.)*** Cost: 15,000 gp.

Ring of kindness: This unadorned tin band causes the wearer to become kindhearted to a fault. He will release prisoners, sell his property and give the money to a nearby orphanage or an unscrupulous character with a phony tale of woe, and other acts of excessive kindness. A special version of ***charm person,*** the ring's effect lasts 1d40 days minus the wearer's level, on a failed saving throw. The character is affected for 1d40 hours minus his level if the save is successful. ***Dispel magic*** negates the effect. Upon recovery, the victim is likely to seek out whoever offered him that ring, hoping to take his losses out of the individual's hide. Cost: 5,000 gp.

Ring of languages: This platinum ring is engraved with the words "The Gift of Gab." The wearer can understand, read, write, and speak any language known by any creature within 60' of the ring. Cost: 5,000 gp.

Note: The limited edition variety of this ring also has a 10% chance of functioning as a ***ring of truthfulness,*** due to the rushed process of creating them. This secondary function is undetectable by ***analyze*** or ***identify.***

Books

BeB touts Bargle's self-help books as the best-selling of their kind. This claim is true, as they are the only ones of their kind. No other mage would be brazen enough to put into writing how he rose from orphaned street urchin to powerful wizard without ever setting foot inside a magic school.

BeB salespeople point out the beautiful binding of the limited edition volumes, ("It's genuine synthetic dragon hide!") and mention the critics that commented on the 1004 AC mass-market editions.

Each book is 8" X 11" and costs 15,000 gp. Page counts for individual volumes are given in the descriptions.

Bringing Out the Wizard in You: A Twelve Step Program ("A masterpiece!" raved Otkel Shadowchaser of the ***Alphatian Book Review):*** This 196-page book is part autobiography, part practical guide for working-class people trying to balance the day-to-day struggle of survival with magical studies. Using his own life-experiences as examples, Bargle provides an excellent series of stepping stones for the dedicated and talented peasant who's really a mage at heart.

Note: The limited edition of this book

includes Bargle's first original spell, interpret writings. This 1st-level spell is a combination of read ***magic*** and ***read languages,*** and was created by Bargle soon after he stole his first magic primer at age 14. This less-than-successful reinvention of the wheel is only effective 50% of the time, whether cast on magical or non-magical script.

Social Advancement Through the Selective Use ***of*** Charm ***and*** Disintegrate ***Spells*** ("The most significant work since Marl's 'Enter the Purple Worm'," said A. Otto Erol of the ***Glantrian*** Free Press): This 253-page book details how a mage might elevate himself from lowly hedge wizard to king and beyond. The author's preface states it is a philosophical work, intended to alert rulers to what a magist might be doing in the dark—not to inspire said magist to plot against his master. Nonetheless, this book was banned in Alphatia, Thyatis, and Wendar. On the other hand, in Glantri, Bargle was awarded an honorary degree from the Great School of Magic.

The Adventurer's Companion: A Do-It-Yourself Indestructible Spell Book ("If I had known earlier what I learned from this book, that fire elemental wouldn't have destroyed my spell book, and I'd still know how to cast ***gelatinous cube to gello.*** A must-have for all wizards and magic-using elves," said Alfric Tingard, editor-in-chief of ***Ierendi Adventures Quarterly):*** This 60-page volume presents a series of anecdotal mishaps with spell books, and Bargle's research notes for a spell he's named ***steel spells.*** The purpose of this spell is to allow even wizards of limited power to turn spell books into small (one-inch diameter) virtually indestructible steel medallions. By uttering a command word, the medallion turns into a spell book and visa versa. Whereas the earlier editions of this book only provided readers with Bargle's research notes (thus requiring readers to come up with their versions of the spells,) the collector's edition provides the finished spell! ("As always, Bargle the Infamous is working for the betterment of wizards everywhere!")

Note: ***steel spells*** is a 2nd-level spell that will indeed transform any spell book into a steel medallion (engraved with the symbol or words of the caster's choice.) A command word must be uttered to change the medallion to a book and back again. What isn't mentioned in ***Adventurer's Companion,*** however, is that any ***dispel magic*** attack, regardless of caster levels, will make the ***steel spells*** enchantment irreversible. This, of course, is exceptionally inconvenient if the mage upon whom ***dispel magic*** was cast happened to be wearing his transformed spell book around his neck. At DM's option, this flaw in the spell may be recognized by PCs who carefully read Bargle's research notes and make a successful Intelligence check.

Conclusion

Hopefully, DMs running magic-rich campaigns will find the BeB Magic Company a useful model for magic shops that carry anything but ***girdles of giant*** strength—there's nothing like saddling the PC looking for a ***ring of invisibility*** with an ***invisible ring.*** At the very least, there are one or two rings in this article that can shake up jaded players—and bring happy smiles to everyone's faces (or at least the DM's face).

Ω

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Fuzzy reviews

Fuzzy is as fuzzy does

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#7101 FUZZYHEROES* game
by Christopher Clark, 1992

It may not seem like it at first glance, but the FUZZY HEROES game is a set of miniatures war game rules, pretty much the same as any other. Instead of hordes of 15-mm Napoleonic figures fighting across a felt-covered tabletop, it features plush animals (the Fuzzy Heroes) in a war against hard-plastic action figures (the Renegade Boy Toys), using the terrain of the bedroom, or the floor of the playroom.

The FUZZY HEROES game comes in a nicely-produced 80-page book, perfect-bound, with holes pre-drilled to fit a standard three-ring binder. The cover and interior feature cartoon-style artwork (by Jon Niccum), most of which are mere decoration, but a few of which do happen to illustrate rules points from the text. The layout is simple and quite readable (although the text does suffer from typo problems), and the table of contents is complete (making the lack of an index only a minor quibble). The materials needed for play are basically the same as for any other miniatures game: some 6-sided dice, rulers/tape measures, figures (plush and plastic toys), terrain (pillow mountains, sock rocks, etc.), paper & pencils, and a playing surface. Since all of these materials should be easy to find in any gamer's home, at a total cost of $10.95, the FUZZY HEROES game is probably going to be the least expensive miniatures game you'll ever come across.

Now the rules come in. Each stuffed animal or plastic toy is assigned ratings in six statistics: Energy Points (EP: the loss of which causes a character to fall asleep, making him a terrain obstacle), a Defensive Classification (DC: the number an attacker must beat on a roll of 3d6 to hit), a Movement Allowance (MA: a number of inches moveable each turn), Number of Attacks (#/Att.), Energy Dice (ED: damage rolled for successful attacks), and Terrain Effects (TE). Determining all these stats is a simple procedure related to the specifics of each stuffed animal in use, i.e., the "maximum linear measurement" of a toy determines its EP, MA (which can be modified by movement-related features, such as a toy having running shoes or no legs), and DC (which is then modified by its main color). Thus, the new stuffed tiger ("Tiggey") my wife gave me for Christmas this past year would have 8 EP, a MA of 18", and a DC of 9 (10 for length, -1 for being mostly orange), a #/Att. of 4/turn (for having four legs and a tail), an ED of 2 (he'd have had more if he'd been constructed with visible claws or teeth), and as for TE, Tiggey is affected normally by all except Mountains, because tigers are good at leaping and jumping.

In the combat section, the game's miniatures-gaming roots become apparent: in order to attack another Hero "the attacking Fuzzy Hero must be in range, have the proper facing, have line-of-sight, and declare his attack". All of these conditions can be determined pretty easily ("Are they within 6" of each other? Are they facing each other?"), and then the attacker rolls 3d6 for each of this

[Editor's note: Awhile back, regular DRAGON® Magazine contributor Spike Jones sent in these reviews. I thought that DRAGON readers would like to read about these products, but I didn't want to bump—an editor's term meaning "replace"—any of our other review columns for this admittedly lighthearted topic. (After all, these games we play are a very serious matter, right?) I was in a quandary. Then I thought of the perfect place for this column: the April issue! Enjoy. —Dale]

Role-playing games' ratings

Not recommended

Poor, but may be useful

Fair

Good

Excellent

The best

Hero's #/Attacks, and for each of these rolls that exceed the defender's DC the attacker rolls damage dice equal to the attacker's ED; each odd number rolled subtracts one EP from the victim (that is a 1, 3, or 5 subtract only 1 EP each, not 1, 3, or 5 EP).

Of course, it couldn't be as easy as that. There also are the game's Advanced Rules, which add such options as Vehicles, Climbing, Retreating, Fatigue, Morale, Special Attacks (Tig gey would be able to use a stunning Sonic Attack because he belches (it's ***supposed*** to be a roar) when you squeeze him), Weapon-Use, Armor, and the dreaded Beguiling Breakaway Bonus Blanket Bounce. And then there's rules for building, besieging, storming, and undermining fortifications. There also is a chart that can be used to balance the strength of opposing forces by calculating point values for various Attribute levels and special powers, and either adjusting powers to even things out, or modify the scenario played to give the underdog more lenient victory conditions. The game's authors recommend that you use the Advanced Rules sparingly, as there are lots of them, and it would force the players to refer to the book much more frequently than usual during play. I also recommend that these rules be used only when all of the players are adults (or nearly so), or if any children playing are fully comfortable with the basic rules.

Although FUZZY HEROES game sessions would provide a hardcore miniatures player with a much-needed break, the primary purpose of this game is to introduce non-gamers to the miniatures hobby. While "non-gamers" usually refers to the friends, co-workers, and spouses of gamers in other reviews of "introductory" games, in this case, the definition must also be expanded to include children, nieces/nephews, etc. The subject matter, a war between heroic stuffed animals and villainous action figures, is something that youngsters have no trouble understanding, and the Basic Rules are simple and short enough that children down to the recommended age of six should have no trouble playing as long as their parental assistants are on hand. Not only does this help ensure that there'll be a next generation of miniatures players, but it also gives the present generation an activity in common with their kids (or grandkids!), which can be a rare thing indeed. Still, a slightly more basic version of the rules that would have allowed these young kids to play on their own once the game was set up would have been nice.

Finally, there is a complete scenario ("They've Kidnapped Santa!") that makes use of many of the Advanced Rules to serve as an introduction to them. The adventure comes complete with multiple factions within the two main forces (to allow for more than two players), varying victory conditions, and strategic notes. Unfortunately, it also comes with the assumption that the players will have the same mix of stuffed animals and plastic toys as the authors, and fully ten pages of the book are taken up by Character Forms for the Heroes and Renegades involved in this scenario.

But what's the biggest problem with the FUZZY HEROES game? Well, just as most miniatures games recreate a specific event or era in history, and it behooves a Napoleonics player to know a bit about the Napoleonic Wars, the FUZZY HEROES game comes with its own "canned" history that you get to recreate (and expand upon) in play. Throughout the book there are narrative sections that describe battles between the Fuzzy Heroes of FrolicHaven (under good King Swineheart) and the Renegade Boy Toys (under the evil Eye King). Unfortunately, while reading some of these short bits can be fun, the more of them I came across, the more I skimmed over them; I just didn't care all that much about the deliberations of King Swineheart's Court before they went to the field to play-out a battle. If you aren't interested in reading how some other group of players might have role-played events in the background of their own adventures, then this material becomes filler.

Still, ignoring a few pages of dubious value, and assuming that the players are going to be able to figure out just how many complications they can manageably add to their play sessions, the FUZZY HEROES game makes for a good, inexpensive, and fun game that "can be enjoyed by the whole family" (as the books back cover puts it).

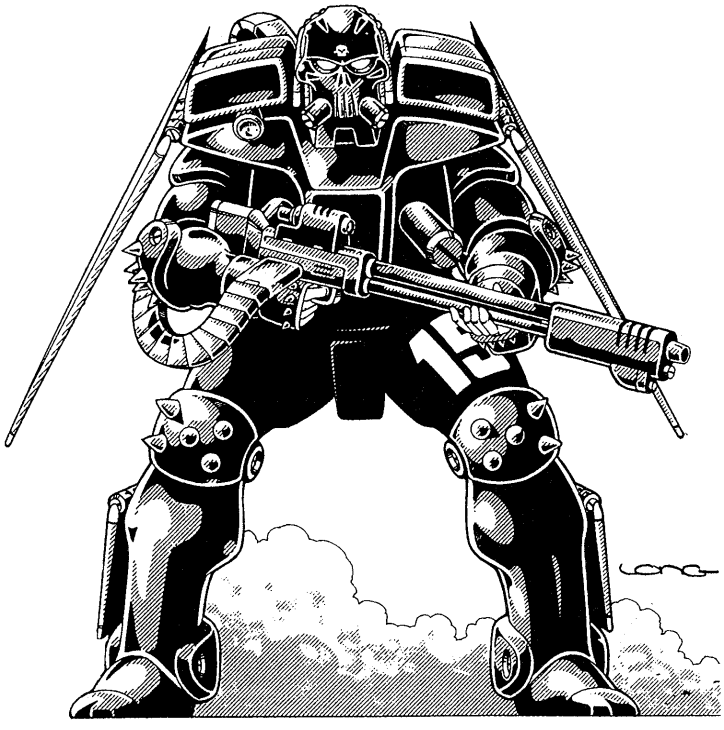
#7102 FUZZY SOOPER HEROES* game
by Christopher Clark, 1993

What do you do when you've mastered all the Advanced Rules in the FUZZY HEROES game? You add a whole new set (with a somewhat different flavor) from the FUZZY SOOPER HEROES rules. Like the first volume, this supplement is 80 perfect-bound pages long, drilled for a 3-ring binder, and again priced at $10.95.

The premise of this book is that some of the Fuzzy Heroes have come across some funny costumes that grant the wearers sooper powers when worn. These discoveries are described in some more lengthy narratives (in fact, there are more of them here than there were in FUZZY HEROES) and many of the Jon Niccum cartoons throughout illustrate scenes from the narratives.

In order to convert a normal Fuzzy Hero (or Renegade) into a Sooper Hero, he must possess (and wear) a mask, cape, and emblem of some sort, all of which can be as simple as a piece of masking tape stuck onto the appropriate part of the toy, or as complicated as a fully-fitted sewn costume. If a toy qualifies, it automatically gets a set of Sooper Attributes (which are identical for all Sooper Heroes, and higher than for normal toys), some common Sooper Powers (Flight, Sooper Strength, and the ability to directly attack buildings and vehicles), an individual Sooper Power based on the costume's main color (so that Airbear, a superhero bear I sewed for myself as a kid, would have the "Ballistic Weapon Energy Absorption" power because of his mostly-red costume), and a special "trademark ability" chosen by the player (such as fire- or ice-breathing, or Size Control, which can only be taken if the player has several different-sized versions of the same toy to use to represent the Hero growing or shrinking). Some of the powers have silly components (to activate the Reflection power, the player must say "I'm rubber, you're glue. Whatever you do bounces off me and sticks to you."), but are generally simple enough that young players are going to understand them (although adults will still have to participate to keep track of the rules).

While the Sooper Powers themselves are just an extension of the Advanced Rules options in the FUZZY HEROES game, there is one major change to the rules. In addition to gaining special powers, Fuzzy Sooper Heroes adopt a chivalric code of conduct called the W.A.S.H. ("Words Attributable to Sooper Heroes"). As a result, Fuzzy Sooper Heroes find it difficult to retreat from combat, they must always attack their strongest



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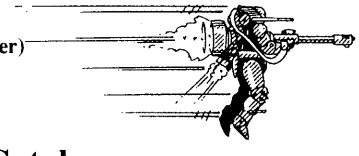

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enemies first, and they must always look for opportunities to use "Buddy Talk" to convert an opponent to their side in a conflict without need of combat. In addition, such activities as attacking a foe while he's down and taunting defeated enemies are prohibited. To enforce these role-playing-like injunctions, a system of penalties and rewards is introduced: Heroes can be awarded Chivalry Points for "conspicuous chivalry" with the agreement of the other players, and they can be used to improve dice rolls and Attribute scores in play. The penalty for breaking the code of conduct is for the offending toy to be "outcast" from Fuzzy Hero society, being "placed back in the toy box until they regain their senses".

In addition, there are rules given for running tournaments that include internal restrictions, such as the prohibition of "secret tournaments" (all tournaments must be publicly proclaimed and no prospective contestant can be turned down), the requirement that safe-conduct passes be issued to all participants, the necessity for tangible rewards (such as special weapons or deeds to land) to be issued, and the idea that tournament grounds are "neutral territory," all of which come with penalties for infringements. As a subset of the new tournament rules, there are also rules for Jousting, Pugilism, and other contests of skill or power.

To finish up the book, another complete adventure ("The Assault on Castle Stuffmore"), and the Character Forms for the 36 Fuzzy Heroes and Renegades (taking up 12 pages) are included, as well as a two-page summary of charts from the original FUZZY HEROES book.

There are two main effects of the addition of this chivalric code and of Chivalry Points. The first is that the authors hope to instill the rules of fair-play into young players. For the first time, there's a set of game rules which specifically say that there is a penalty (having your toy taken out of play) for poor sportsmanship, and a reward (Chivalry Points) for playing within the spirit of the game. And the fact that Chivalry Points can be awarded only upon the unanimous agreement of all the players should quickly teach co-operation to players.

The second effect is that, by adding a method whereby players can permanently increase the Attributes of their "characters," and by making rules about conduct within the game's background (i.e., rules like the safe-conduct to tournaments, which govern events outside of the conflict that the war game portion of the rules governed), the FUZZY SOOPER HEROES rules has turned the FUZZY HEROES game into a role-playing game. Thus, all of the use that could have been made of the original game to introduce children to the miniatures war gaming hobby, can now be turned towards introducing them to RPGs.

Although the percentage of "fluff" text in the FUZZY SOOPER HEROES book was even higher than that in the FUZZY HEROES game, the remaining text was useful, and it added an entirely new dimension to the game. While not perfect, this is definitely a book to buy if you liked the FUZZY HEROES game.

Note: Inner City Games also has FUZZY HEROES plush animals available for use in the game.

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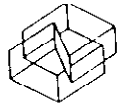

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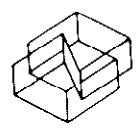

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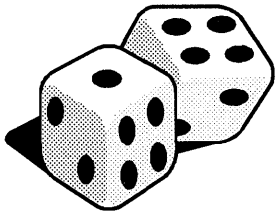

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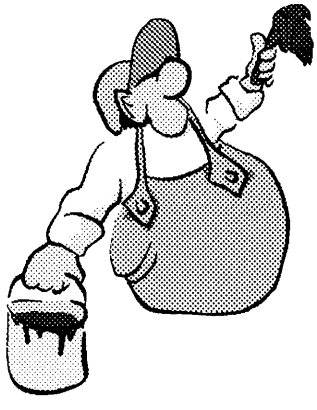

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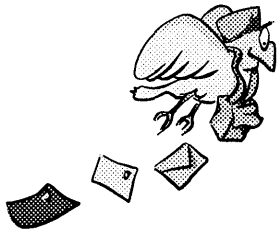

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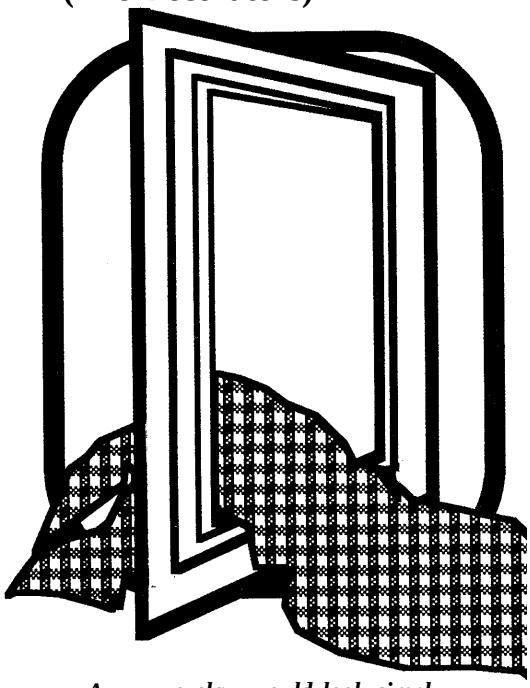
From one of the authors of ***Factol's Manifesto*** comes details on a few factions for the PLANESCAPE™ setting that have died out over the years. Here are the details of the factions, written when they were still going concerns. Common knowledge says that they have all been extinct for a long time—and maybe it's better that way. (Of course, common knowledge has been wrong before.)

The Beautification League (The Decorators)



A mauve claw would look simply lovely over that archway!
Factol Dionystan of the Beautification League

Faction philosophy: This faction believes the multiverse is a place to be enjoyed, and they see it as their duty to help everybody to enjoy it by "beautifying" it. These berks will take any opportunity to paint a wall, hang a picture, rearrange furniture, plant a garden, or any of a dozen other things to increase the charm of a place. This includes them telling a cutter what they really think about a body's clothes, hairstyle, and home.

Here's the chant: by beautifying the multiverse, a body pleases the powers, or whatever stands behind the powers and pulls their strings. Even the most offensive individual can be brought around to happiness and goodness if only given a nice place to live and trendy clothes—and maybe a good bath and a thorough makeover. Well, these are the cutters who are going to bring the change around, whether anybody else likes it or not.

It's not that these berks are militant—but they are persistent. They figure they know the dark of how things should look, and everyone else had better listen. A body who doesn't listen to their advice ought to watch out. The Beautification League might sneak up one night and do some redecorating—or they might just decide a cutter "doesn't fit the color scheme" and eliminate him.

The Decorators seem to have a special grudge against the sods and barmies of Sigil, because they tend to clutter up the landscape, and they've got a general order to get rid of all they see. The nicer Decorators might bring the unfortunates to a place where they can be kept or even rehabilitated, but the nastier bashers of the Beautification League have been to remove such "eyesores" permanently.

The Beautification League has been working on Sigil for years, and while a few smart-mouth bashers might say that's why the city looks the way it does, the truth is that the Decorators haven't accomplished much. They have two big problems. First, the planes are just too big (try watching infinite color schemes!), and not enough people care to help the Decorators, especially in places like Baator.

Second, the Decorators don't always agree, and they often argue among themselves.

Primary plane of influence: The Decorators maintain a small, tastefully embellished abode in Arborea. They could have chosen any plane, but Mechanus was "too boring." the Abyss "simply disgusting," Pandemonium "far too windy," and so forth. In Sigil, the Beautification League makes its headquarters in the Grand Gardens.

Allies and enemies: The Decorators get along famously with the Sensates, who can experience whatever the Decorators create. The Decorators think most of the other factions need a little more class, especially the Wizards of the Black Teddy (see below).

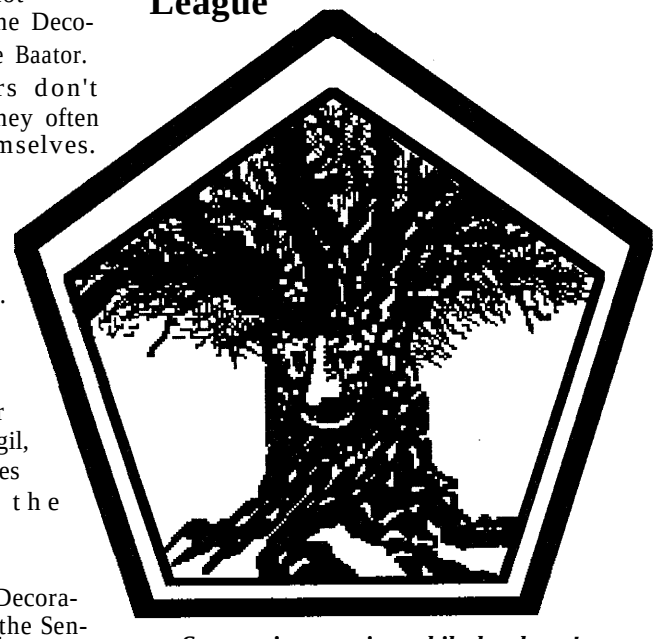
The Doomguard have a certain admiration for the Beautification League, which contributes to entropy they feel. The Bleakers are annoyed by the cheerful attitude of the Decorators, and the Dustmen think them frivolous. The Mercykillers find them annoying in the extreme, and want to put all of them in the dead-book. ***[Editor's Note: This is exactly what happened, too.]***

Eligibility: Evil characters can't join this faction; as the Decorators put it, their taste is ***"tres gauche."*** Other than that, anybody can join the Beautification League.

Benefits: A Decorator can tell instantly when something is out of place. When a member of the faction enters a room, the DM should make a Wisdom check for the character; if the check succeeds, the character instantly notices any secret or concealed doors in the room.

Restrictions: A Decorator also notices when other things are out of place, or if they aren't aesthetically pleasing—and the Decorator can't help telling a body about it either. This makes them annoying, and a member of the Beautification League suffers a -3 penalty to Charisma.

The Free Flora Collective (The Veggies, The Tree League



Stop eating our immobile brethren! Stop using our limbs as weapons!
Factol Rose Amaryllis of the Free Flora Collective

Faction philosophy: The members of this faction are convinced that walking plants are destined to rule the multiverse. Of course, that's mainly because the high-up men of the Free Flora Collective are actually high-up plants. The chant goes like this: ani-

Plant Politics

by Tim Beach

Artwork by Tim Beach & Larry Smith

The Lady of Pun says,

"Strike a poseur."

mals live by killing, while plants live by digesting the rotting remains of once-living beings. These berks (barks?) say this makes plants a superior form of life.

The Free Flora Collective, though, has decided to take the battle to the animals, and are an armed and radical bunch. A berk who goes around cutting down trees, or trampling on the grass, or eating salads, had better hope there's not a member of the Free Flora Collective nearby. See, since the Free Flora Collective believes in the superiority of plants, they try to stop anyone and everyone from harming plants. While they're mostly concerned with intelligent plants, they also try to protect their "unenlightened and soil-bound cousins."

One of the Veggies' ongoing projects is to kill all the herbivores they can find. This not only protects plants, but once it begins to work—they say—the carni-

vores and omnivores will be forced to feed on each other, until the animals wipe themselves out.

Primary plane of influence: The Veggies are said to have headquarters in the Beastlands, where they hunt herbivores, and in Bytopia, where their freedom fighters work to stop the depredations of the woodcutters of Dothion. They don't have a headquarters in Sigil, though they are said to have "branches" in various gardens scattered around the city.

Allies and enemies: The Free Flora Collective considers all other factions to be their enemies, mainly because the other factions don't allow sentient plants, but they do allow bashers that eat plants, or cut them down for firewood. The Veggies have a special hatred for the Beautification League, who regard their kind as mere decoration, and often confine them to pots or fenced plots of land with poor soil and lighting.

Most other factions are unaware of the existence of the Veggies. Those that are aware regard them as pretty ludicrous. The Veggies just don't fit into the philosophies of most other factions. There are some Sensates who like talking to the Veggies, so they can come to understand "the plight of the plant," and the Xaositects like pulling the leaves off Veggies. The biggest enemy of the Free Flora Collective, though, is the Herbivorous Assembly (see below).

Eligibility: Only an intelligent, mobile plant can become a member of the Free Flora Collective. The faction also allows a few associate members: cutters (***not*** leaf cutters) who are purely carnivorous, and who sympathize with the Veggies' quest for freedom from oppression. As a body might suspect, there aren't a lot of associate members.

Benefits: The Veggies gain benefits according to their species: they can usually hide among humanoids, since few humanoids recognize them as intelligent beings. Thus, a member of the Free Flora Collective can hide in the corner, looking like a potted plant, and eavesdrop on a conversation. Though Veggies usually consider such duty degrading, they understand its value in building a vast log of information, and they have established a spy network known as "the Grapevine." They are said to have plants in every other faction headquarters, where they can sow the seeds of revolt.

Restrictions: Like the faction's benefits, its restrictions are based on the species of the members. There are some places a plant can't go, and there are some things a plant can't do. For example, it's nearly impossible for a treant to impersonate a dwarven ambassador and crash a swanky party. In addition, most humanoids have little respect for walking plants, and they tend to regard them as ambulatory kindling.

The Herbivorous Assembly (The Vegetarians)

Be kind to the animals. Or else.
Factol Du'liddel of the Herbivorous Assembly

Faction philosophy: The Herbivorous Assembly consists of berks who have decided to never eat meat. And they think nobody else should be eating meat, either. They think the dark of the multiverse is that the so-called dumb animals are the repositories of great wisdom. Oh, maybe not all animals are fonts of knowledge, but some are, and it's better to not eat any of them. If a cutter (a leaf cutter, in this case) can live in harmony with the animals, talk to the animals, then she'll learn the dark of things.

So, the Vegetarians don't eat animals, though a few namers in the faction might eat some animal products, like milk, cheese, or eggs. And to make sure they can get along with the animals some day, they have to keep others from eating them or bothering them as well. This means animals can't be hunted for any reason, for food, or to provide raw materials for clothing, or for any other reason. Rabid Vegetarians have been known to attack unlucky sods just for wearing leather. A cutter can't expect to advance very far in the ranks of the Herbivorous Assembly if he wears leather or any other product taken from an animal.

One day, says the Herbivorous Assembly, when every living being in the multiverse has given up eating meat, everyone will live in peace and harmony, and the dark of everything will be revealed.

Of course, this means the Herbivorous Assembly also is devoted to wiping out all carnivores. However, they can fight predators only when those predators attack innocent herbivores. Thus, a lot of Vegetarians hang around in the forests of the various planes, watching herds of plant-eaters, waiting for a predator to attack.

Primary plane of influence: The Vegetarians have a headquarters in the Beastlands. In Sigil, they run a chain of "health food" inns, where "gourmet vegetarian dishes" are prepared.

Allies and enemies: The Vegetarians try to get along with most of the other factions, though they have a strong distaste for the Wizards of the Black Teddy, because of the excessive amounts of leather they wear. (It's not that the Black Teddy wizards wear large amounts—pieces—of leather; they don't. It's just that leather is ***all*** they wear.) The Vegetarians also go around rattling their bone-boxes about the evils of eating meat, and annoying almost everybody.

Most factions consider the Vegetarians to be pretty harmless, if a little barmy. The Sensates think their views are too restrictive: to really experience life, one should eat a few animals, say the Sensates; this makes the Vegetarians think ill of them. The Dustmen think the Vegetarians are all barmy; death is a part of life, and hunting and killing a part of the grand scheme. Finally, the Veggies have a very strong dislike of the Vegetarians, and the two factions have constant skirmishes in Sigil and elsewhere. Lately, the Veggies have begun attacking inns run by the Vegetarians, to "free political prisoners." ***[Editor's note: Eventually, the Herbivorous Assembly and the Free Flora Collective declared war on one***

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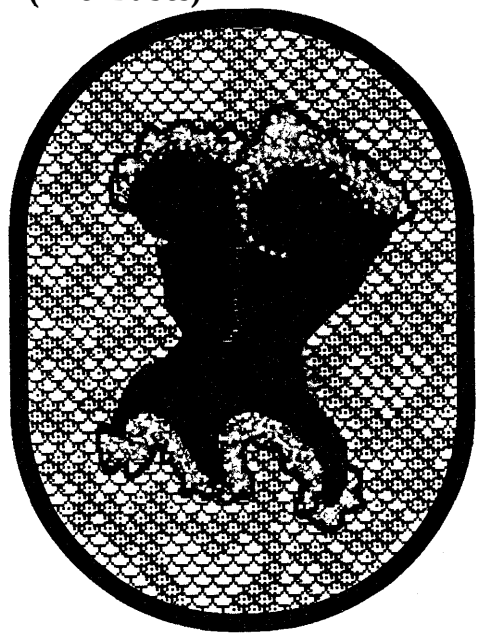
another and wiped each other out.]

Eligibility: Anybody can join the Herbivorous Assembly, as long as they never eat meat again. The faction is open to all races and alignments, but humans and elves fill most of their ranks.

Benefits: A Vegetarian gains the ranger's ability to befriend and calm animals. A Vegetarian ranger gets a free nonweapon proficiency in Animal Training.

Restrictions: A Vegetarian can never attack an animal, but can defend himself or another animal. This has been the cause of much consternation to adventuring members (and their companions), because the Vegetarian is restricted from helping in many combat encounters. They can defend companions from predators, but won't help anyone who eats meat, because it's a fight between predators.

The Wizards of the Black Teddy (The Babes)



Sure, it's a little cold, but it's better protection than any armor:
Factol Elle McFearsome of the Wizards of the Black Teddy

They're babelicious!
Innumerable male cutters and bashers

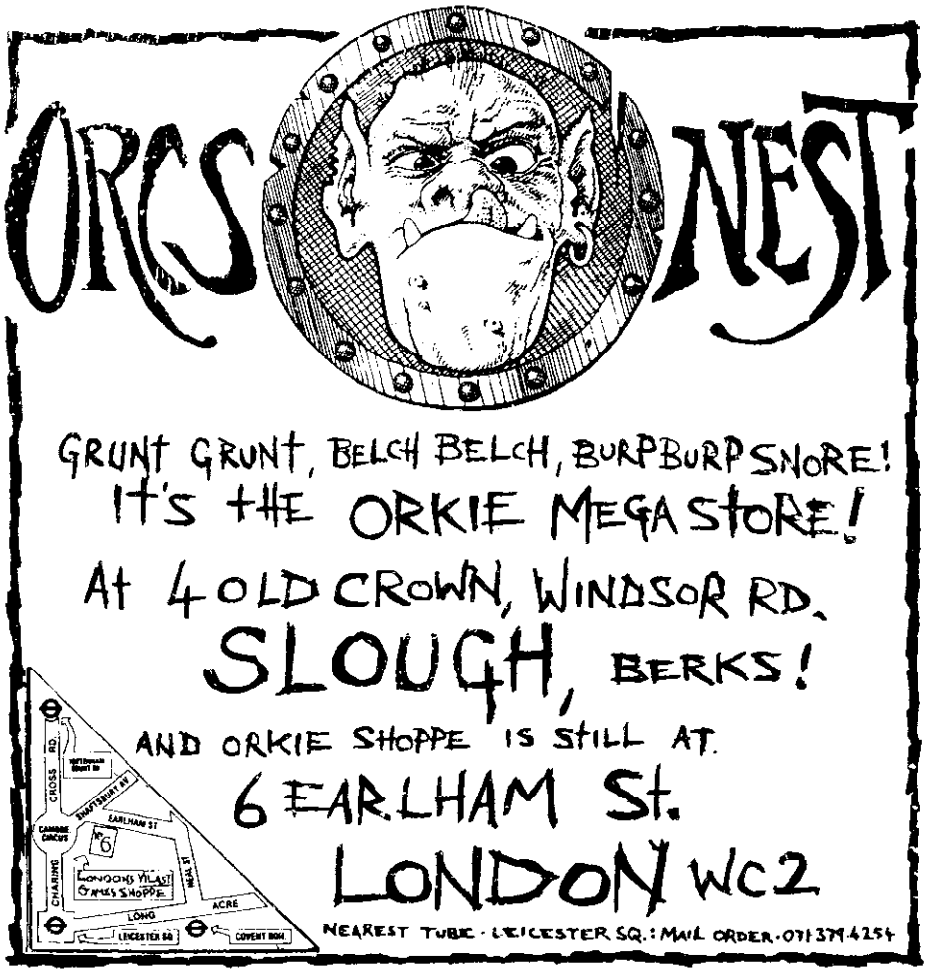
Faction philosophy: Basically, the Wizards of the Black Teddy are bent on domination—of the planes, and of anyone who gets in their way. As far as these cutters are concerned, the multiverse is messed up because it is mostly controlled by addle-coved males. To solve all the problems, the multiverse must be ruled by females. As their name implies, the Wizards of the Black Teddy have two primary methods for accomplishing their goal: magic and, well, their rather obvious charms, made more obvious by alluring attire—mostly leather. The Babes aren't murderous, like the Mercykillers. They'd prefer a lot of submissive servants to a handful of corpses.

The chant says this faction sprang from a group called the Wizards of the Black Robes, on some backwater prime named Krynn. Tired of being ignored by men who felt superior by virtue of their gender, a group of women broke off from these robed wizards and formed their own group. They found that with a judicious change of attire, they were no longer ignored, and they could befuddle the simple-minded males they dealt with.

Later, a powerful female entity visited Krynn, and a lot of these female wizards decided to join her cause, and then went to live on the planes. There, with their goal of gaining power, especially for women, they found many willing recruits. More than a few female wizards joined their number, and quickly ascended to the rank of Mistress (the equivalent of the factors of other factions). These Mistresses are totally devoted to the Lady of Pain and have led the faction to a strong position in Sigil.

Primary plane of influence: The Wizards of the Black Teddy have a headquarters in Baator, specifically in the dungeons of Maladomini, where they give lesser fiends something to fear. The chant says there are hundreds of males chained to walls beneath Maladomini, where the Wizards of the Black Teddy can whip them into shape.

Allies and enemies: This faction's allies and enemies can't always be categorized; that is, part of a faction might hate them, while other members like them. For the most part, males of most species don't have too



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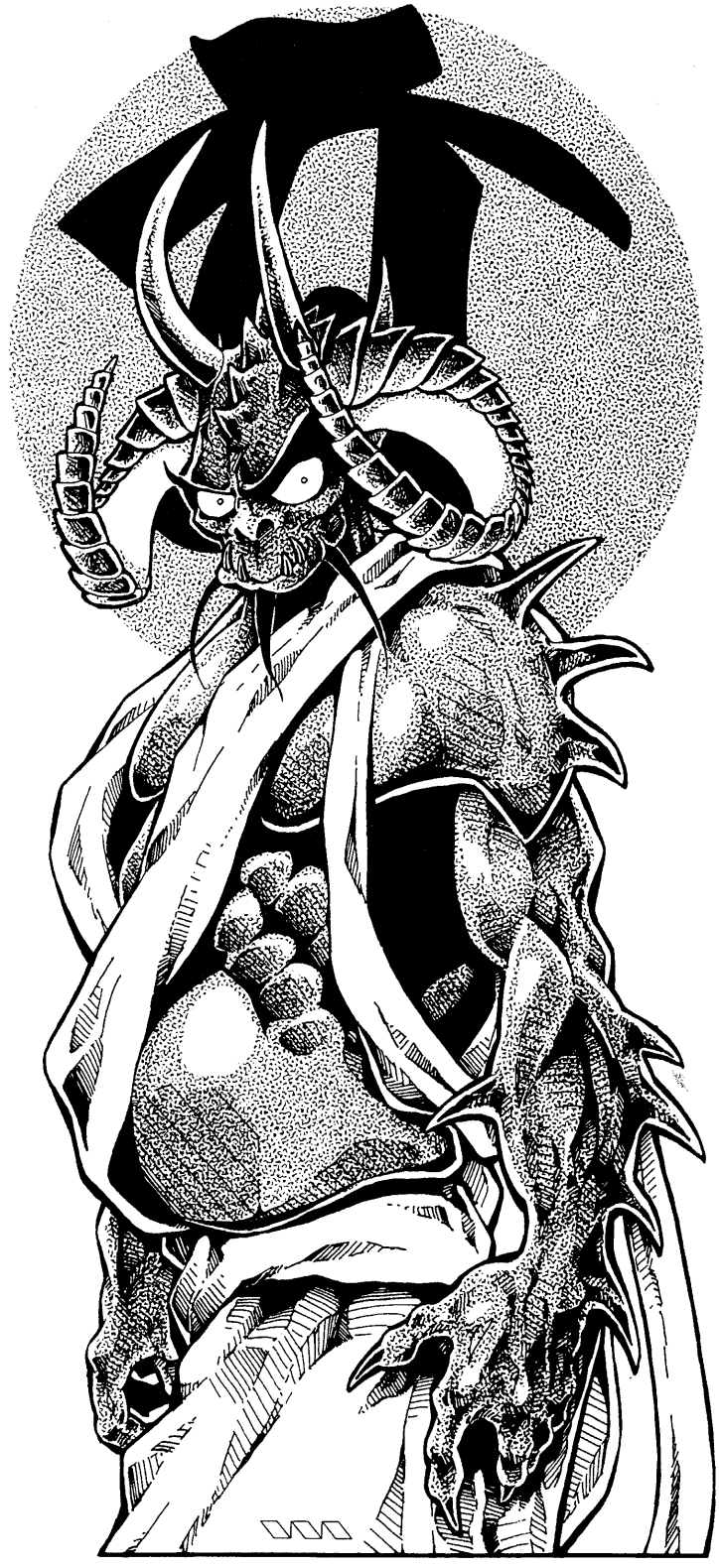

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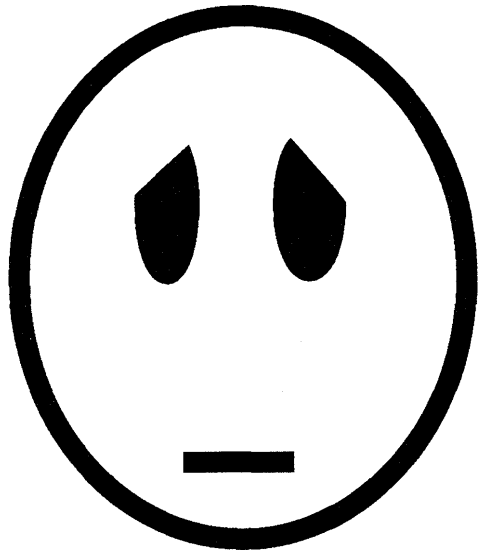
much of a problem with the Babes—for blatantly obvious reasons—but some females do. However, the Sensates like the sensual nature of the Wizards of the Black Teddy, and the Ciphers admire their individuality. The Dustmen ignore them. The Anarchists are fond of the Babes because they are disruptive to other factions, and the Guvners see the Wizards of the Black Teddy as a potential threat to their power structure.

Eligibility: The Wizards of the Black Teddy have four somewhat unusual membership requirements. First, all are wizards of one kind or another; generalist, dual-classed, multi-classed, and specialist wizards are allowed. Second, only females of any species can join. Third, they can't be good in alignment. And finally, to be a Wizard of the Black Teddy, a sorceress must have a Charisma score of at least 13. This is one of the few factions that accepts fiends as members; there are more than a few erinyes and succubi in their ranks, not to mention a lot of tieflings.

Benefits: The Babes are very distracting; males who see them tend to forget what they're doing, what they-'re saying, where they're going, who they are, and so forth. When fighting one of the Wizards of the Black Teddy, a male of any species, intelligent or unintelligent (most of the Babes would argue that there's no such thing as an intelligent male), has to make successful Wisdom check, or he can't bring himself to strike her. For monsters without a Wisdom score, roll 3d6 to determine a score for any creature with Intelligence of 5 or more; for others, use the creature's Intelligence score.

Restrictions: One detriment to belonging to this faction is that other females usually don't like the Babes, and they go around calling them "trollops" or worse. The real disadvantage, though, is the, well, uniform (such as it is) of the Babes. To say the least, it's a bit drafty. A Wizard of the Black Teddy suffers a permanent -1 penalty to her Constitution score due to getting chilled easily.

The Apathetic Alliance (The Apathetics)



Who cares?
Drevis of the Apathetic Alliance

Faction philosophy: This faction doesn't so much have a philosophy as it has a way of life: they don't care about anything. They don't go around telling other people not to care, and they don't try to explain why nobody should care—they just don't care themselves. And most Apathetics don't go around doing much, or even go around at all.

There are a few namers in the Apathetic Alliance who use that as an excuse to do whatever they want. These bashers are a danger to themselves and others, but usually don't last for very long: either someone puts them in the deadbook, or they stop caring enough to keep moving.

The Apathetic Alliance started one day when a Bleaker and a Dustman were talking philosophy. Both fell into a deep depression, and both stopped caring about most everything. They stopped going to their faction meetings and stopped wearing faction colors. After a while, their "new" philosophy spread, and other apathetic types started hanging around with them.

While Apathetics occasionally discuss philosophy with other faction members, the conversation usually ends with "Who cares?" The rest of the time, most Apathetics just sit around, in an almost catatonic silence. If their faction were to go away, few would notice and fewer would care.

Primary plane of influence: No Apathetic has ever bothered to build a headquarters, so they don't have one. They also don't have a factol, because nobody cares enough to lead the rest of them in just not caring about anything. To join the Apathetic Alliance, a body just needs to stop expressing an interest in anything, dress in black, and to start hanging around in dark coffee-houses with other Apathetics.

Allies and enemies: The Apathetic Alliance doesn't see much point to having allies, but they don't see much of a point to anything, really. They also can't raise enough feeling about any of the other factions to consider any of them enemies either. Oh, some grumble a little about the Guvners, who see a point to everything, and a few can muster a little admiration for the carefree Xaositects, but most Apathetics just keep to themselves.

Most of the other factions ignore the Apathetics—as the factol of the Athar once said, "Who cares about the Apathetics?" Still, the Bleakers and the Doomguard have some admiration for their philosophy. The Dustmen also share some common ground, since they believe there is nothing in life to care about (except death, of course). The Sensates find the attitude of the Apathetics incomprehensible, and the Guvners deplore the Apathetic Alliance's disregard for laws (and for everything else). The Signers have a little admiration for the Apathetics, because of their rarely exhibited power of mind over matter (see Benefits below), but don't appreciate the Apathetic philosophy.

Eligibility: Anybody can join the Apathetic Alliance, though most are better suited to the Bleakers, Doomguard, Dustmen, or Xaositects.

Benefits: The Apathetics, since they don't care about anything, tend not to notice most things. Therefore, they are completely immune to attacks from normal weapons. Only a spell or a magical weapon can attract enough of their attention to actually cause them damage.

Restrictions: An Apathetic doesn't care enough to adventure, or to take part in any kind of communication or combat. To actually participate in an encounter, an Apathetic must exert his willpower, represented by making a Wisdom check; only if the check succeeds can the Apathetic draw a weapon or otherwise act.

Ω

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Some gray matter would be yummy
If I only had a brain.

I would start out with a *mindblast*
(That always takes 'em out fast),
Their intellects I'd drain.

My chops I'd be lickin'—
Some may say it tastes like chicken—
If I only had a brain.

Oh, I
Can tell you why
Although it hurts me to the very core.
In the past I'd eat those tasty brains galore.
Now I'm too fat
To use the door.

Now in order to get thinner,
Just a lobe or two for dinner.
This diet is insane.

But the day I am slimmer,
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It took my cash.
I couldn't afford it.
I'll tell you now what it's all about:
This game I
Couldn't live without.

You can play MAGIC.
You can buy any card that you desire.
MAGIC.
And you can trade for those you cannot just acquire.

You know I'm right
You can play all night.
On the weekends, too.

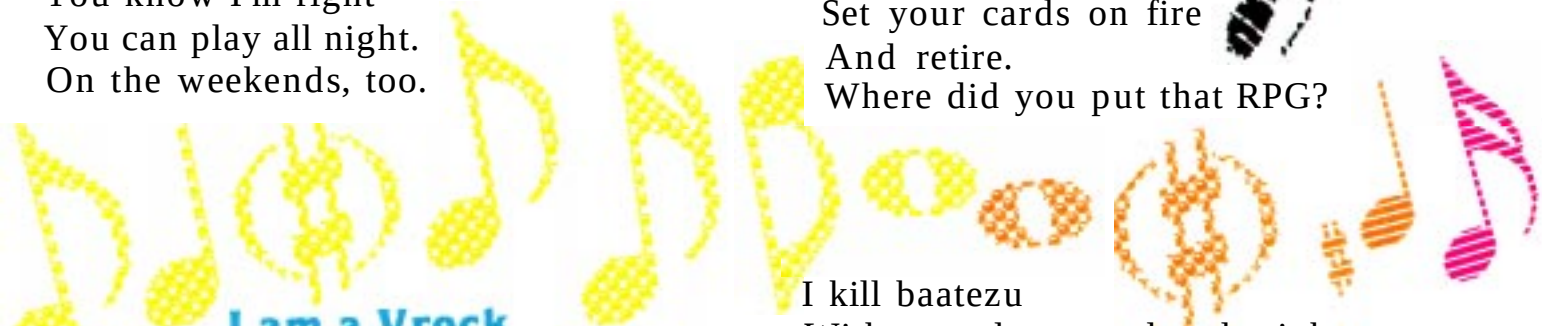
Though you've got your deck,
Your life's a wreck.
Your other friends forget 'bout you.

Doo doo doo doo doo di
Doo doo doo doo doo di
Doo doo doo doo doo di
Doo doo doo doo doo.

And though you don't want to,
You should try to break free.
I know that it's hard to do,
But I made it happen for me.

You can play MAGIC.
Or you can have yourself a date or two.
Without MAGIC.
Now you have cash again, and time to spend it, too.

You know darn well
Addictions can be hell.
Take a tip from me:
Set your cards on fire
And retire.
Where did you put that RPG?



I am a Vrock
For the PLANESCAPE™
campaign setting

(with apologies to
Simon and Garfunkel)

Abyssal day
For a vulturous tanar'ri.
I fight the Blood War,
Circling my victims
Cringing far below.
The look upon their faces shows they know

I am a vrock.
I'm a tanar'ri.

I kill baatezu
With my talons cruel and mighty.
Your armor they will penetrate.

I have no fear of weapons,
Magic is my bane.
It's order and it's goodness I disdain.

I am a vrock.
I'm a tanar'ri.
Don't talk of mercy.
Well, I've heard those pleas before,
The weeping of my enemies.
I won't forget my orders
Or what I want to do—
Just sink my beak and claws right into you.

You Orc, You Orc

For the AD&D game

(with apologies to Liza Minelli, Frank Sinatra, et al)

Start spreading the word,
I'm hunter, you're prey.
I'm gonna be the death of you,
You orc, you orc.

My village has heard
I'm longing to slay.
I'll stab the very heart of you,
You orc, you orc.

I wanna prove that, as you sow so shall you reap,
Because you burned up my farm,
Ate all my sheep.

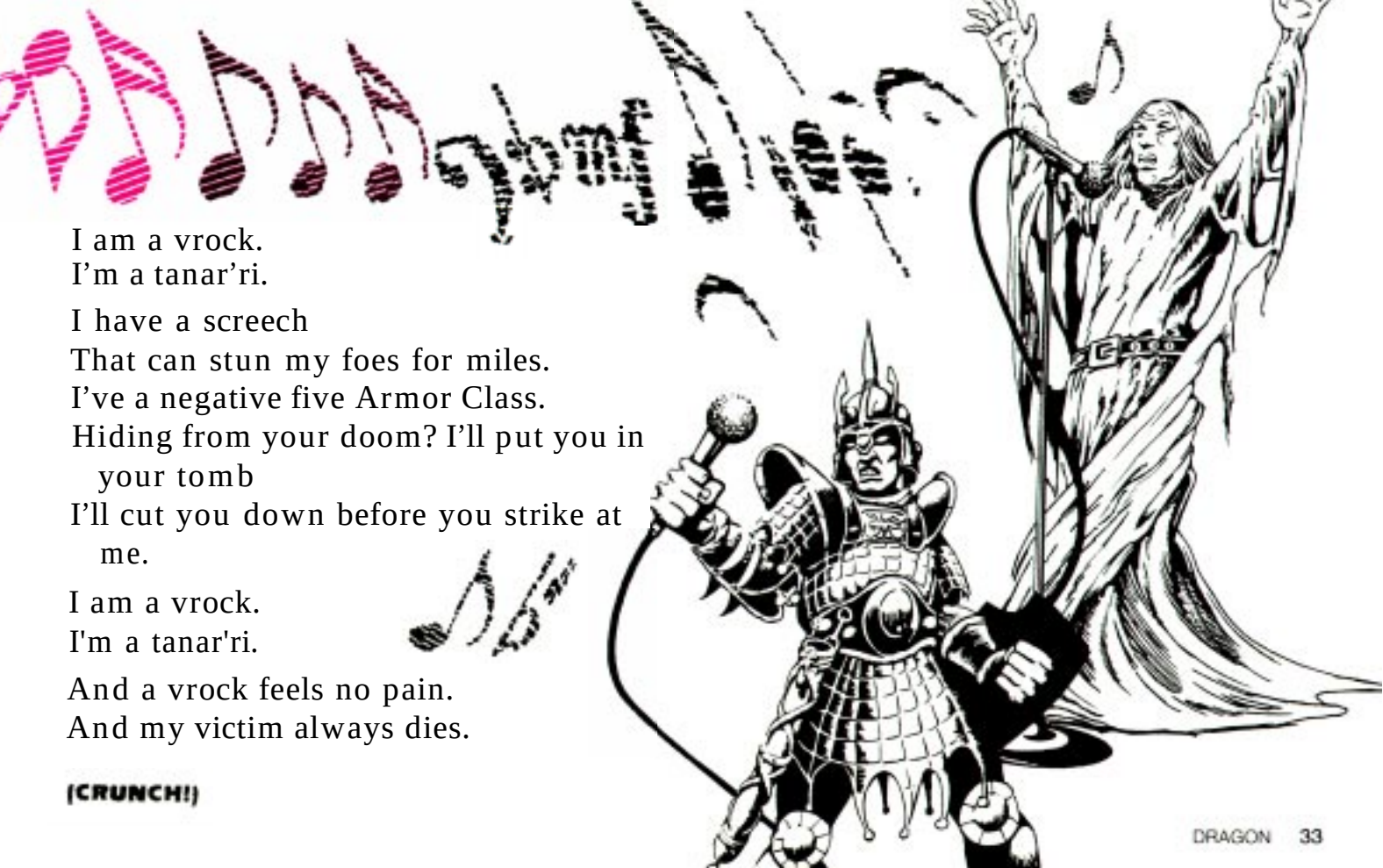
Your death is assured.
I'll find you today.
I'm just too wicked smart for you,
You stupid orc!

A-ha, I see your lair!
You've got ten friends? No fair!
C'mon, be nice, you orc, you orc!

[musical interlude interrupted by sounds of screams, then silence]

I guess we show him that us orcs, we ain't asleep.
And we're still King of the Hill,
Top of the Heap.
One whiff of us
Makes humans weep!

Let's go eat a herd
Fight battles all day.
If there are none, we'll start a few
Us fearsome orcs!

It's cold but we don't care,
We don't wear underwear.
We're what we are
Us orcs, us orcs!

I am a vrock.
I'm a tanar'ri.

I have a screech
That can stun my foes for miles.
I've a negative five Armor Class.
Hiding from your doom? I'll put you in your tomb
I'll cut you down before you strike at me.

I am a vrock.
I'm a tanar'ri.

And a vrock feels no pain.
And my victim always dies.

(CRUNCH!)

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The Lich is Back
For the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting

(with apologies to Elton John)

I was mummified while still alive.
To become undead is what I contrived.
Now I have changed, quite a punch I pack
And you're really gonna get it now—
The lich is back
Ohhhh!

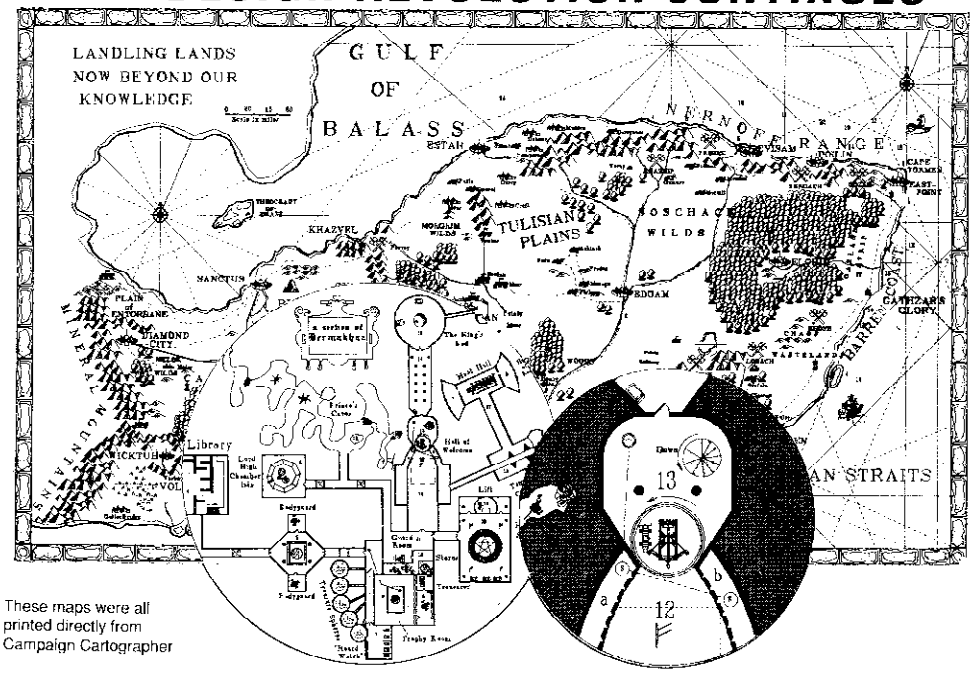
If you want a fight, well stop on by.
I'm skin and bones, but I cannot die.
A lich don't have no mortal coil.
I hang out in the evening under feet of soil.
Ohhhh!

I'm a lich, I'm a lich
Oh the lich is back.
An icy touch is my fav'rite knack.
Yes a lich, yes a lich
And I'm stronger than you.
I'll scare you outta your shoes.
You know you will lose,
Ohhhh.

My chief domain is the subterrain.
My crypt's decor is classic profane.
So come, approach—go 'head, attack!
Oh, you'll see your days are numbered now,
The lich is back!

I'm a lich, I'm a lich
Oh, the lich is back.
Rot and glory (I'm no natural cat).
Yes a lich, yes a lich
And I'm stronger than you
I'll scare outta your shoes.
You know you will lose,
Ohhhh. Ω

THE DESIGN REVOLUTION CONTINUES



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Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, three months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

● :* indicates an Australian convention
❄ indicates a Canadian convention,
◎ indicates a European convention.

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Important: DRAGON® Magazine no longer publishes phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

COASTCON XVIII, March 31-April 2 MS
This convention will be held at the Miss. Gulf Coast Coliseum/Convention Center in Biloxi, Miss. Guests include Mike Stackpole, Steve Perry, Jennifer Roberson, and George Alec Effinger. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show and auction, a charity auction, dealers, videos, and writing and costume contests. Registration: $30. Write to: COASTCON XVII, PO. Box 1423, Biloxi MS 39533-1423.

I-CON 14, March 31-April 2 NY
This not-for-profit convention will be held at the SUNY campus in Stony Brook, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include SF&F, comics, and anime. Write to: I-CON, PO. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790-0550.

PENTECON VII, March 31-April2 NY
This convention will be held at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and movies. Write to: Pentagonal Committee, c/o Kris Mayo, 219 Willard Way, Ithaca NY 14850; or e-mail: pentecon@cornell.edu.

TECHNICON 12, March 31-April 1 VA
This is a revised, updated listing. This convention will be held at the Best Western Red Lion Inn in Blacksburg, Va. Guests include Christie Golden, Melissa Scott, Don Sakers, and Tom Atkinson. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games, panels, an art show and auction, filking, videos and anime, computer games, and dealers. Write to: TECHNICON 12, c/o VTSFFC, PO. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0356; or e-mail via the Internet: Technicon@VTCC1.cc.vt.edu.

UBCON '95, March 31-April2 NY
This convention will be held at North campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo in Amherst, N.Y. Guests include Sam Chupp. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games, an auction, dealers, anime, and SCA demos. Registration fees range from $5-10. Write to: UB-SARPA, 363 Student Union, SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo NY 14260-2100; or e-mail: SARPA@ubvms.cc.buffalo.edu.

FUZZY FEST '95, April 1 MI
This convention will be held at the President's Inn Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games and a card-game tournament. Registration: $4 preregistered: $6 on site. Send an SASE to: West Michigan Gamers, 112 Gold Ave. NW, Grand Rapids MI 49504.

RAWACON '95, April 1 PA
This convention will be held at the gymnasium on the campus of Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, dealers, and artists. Registration: $2.50 preregistered; $5 on site. Write to: RAWACON '95, 33-B N Railroad St., Palmyra PA 17078; or e-mail: DPADDOCK@ACAD.LVC.EDU.

PLEASE NAME OUR CON '95
April 1-2 MI
This convention will be held at the St. Clair Co. Community College in Port Huron Michigan. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a raffle, charity games, and door prizes. Registration: $8 preregistered; $6/day on site. Write to: Ted Golubinski, 204 Huron Ave., Port Huron MI 48060.

SWILCON I, April 1-2 PA
This convention will be held at Swathmore College in Swathmore, Penn. Events include role-playing, board games, and anime. Registration: $15. Write to: Swilcon, c/o Fred Bush, Swarthmore College, 500 College Ave., Swathmore PA 19081; or e-mail at: fbush1@cc.Swarthmore.edu.

TECH CON III, April 7-9 IL
This convention will be held at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: $. Write to: Robert Reichel, 4920 N. Normandy, Chicago IL 60656; or e-mail at: org-gmg@Minna.Acc.lit.edu.

MADICON 4, April 7-9 VA

This convention will be held in Taylor Hall at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games in addition to guest speakers and discussion panels. Other activities include art displays, a dance, a computer and video game room, a large screen anime room, costume call, and con suite. Registration: $7 before 18; $10 thereafter. Write to: Jennifer Grob, Madicon 4, SFFG, JMU Box 7202, Harrisonburg VA; or e-mail at: STUJAGROB@VAX1.ACS.JMU.EDU.

CLARE-VOYANCE II, April 8 CA

This convention will be held at Claremont Colleges in Claremont, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games and a card-game tournament. Registration: $5 preregistered; $15 on site. Write to: Thomas M. Kane, 150 Annapolis Dr., Claremont CA 91711.

OPCON '95, April 8 IL

This convention will be held at Oak Park & River Forest High School in Oak Park, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card-game tournaments. Registration: $4 preregistered; $6 on site. Write to: Oak Park & River Forest HS, c/o Sandy Price, 201 N. Scoville Ave., Oak Park IL 60302.

UTICON I, April 8-9 NY

This convention will be held at the SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome in Utica, New York. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: $12 preregistered; $15 on site. Discount with a valid student ID. Write to: SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome, PO. box 3050, Utica NY, 13504, Attention: STRPG.

GAME FAIRE '95, April 21-23 WA

This convention will be held at the Student Union of Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a used-game auction, anime, a miniatures-painting contest, tournaments, and open gaming. Registration: $18 before April 11; $20 on site. Write to: Merlyn's, N. 1 Browne, Spokane WA 99201.

FRANKCONSTEIN '95, April 21-23 MO

This convention will be held at the Radisson Hotel Clayton in St. Louis, MO. Guests include Glen Cook, Mickey Zucker Reichert, Laurell K. Hamilton, and Wilson "Bob" Tucker. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, a masquerade, a dance, videos, dealers, and filking. Registration: $15 before 1; $22 thereafter, Write to: Name That Con, PO. Box 575, St. Charles MO 63302.

MICROCON '95, April 22 NY

This convention will be held at Manhattan College in Riverdale, N.Y. Events include role-playing and board games. Registration: $5, includes a meal and refreshments. Write to: Manhattan College Games Club, Box 1128, 4513 Manhattan College Parkway, Riverdale NY 10471.

ENIGMACON 8, April 22-23 CA

This convention will be held at the Ackerman Union on the UCLA campus in Los Angeles, California. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network and AD&D® game tournaments, in addition to game demos and special guests. Write to: Thuong Pham, 500 Landfair Ave., Los Angeles CA 90024.

KETTERING GAME CON XII
April 22-23 OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network tournaments, computer games, card games, and a game auction. Registration: $2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429.

CRUISE CON '95, April 27-30 ***

This convention will be held on Carnival's Cruise Ship, the Fantasy, sailing to the Bahamas. Guests include Richard Garfield, Jean Rabe, and Darwin Bromley. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events. and tournaments. Registration: $849 (for an inside cabin). Write to: Andon Unlimited, Cruise Con, PO. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

MAGIC CARPET CON 3, April 28-30 GA

This convention will be held at the North Georgia Convention and Trade Center in Dalton, Ga. Guests include Elizabeth Moon, Tom Deitz, and Mark Poole. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a masquerade, an art show and auction, and a con suite. Registration: $25 before 15; $30 on site. Write to: MAGIC CARPET CON 3, PO. Box 678, Rocky Face GA 30740; or SusanB14 on America On-line.

SPRINGCON '95, April 28-30 NE

This gaming convention will be held at the ReUnion Building in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: Free to the public. Novices and interested nongamers are encouraged to attend. Write to: SPRINGCON Committee, Box 1126, 905 N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508.

GENERAL CON '95, April 29-30 PA

This convention will be held at the Carlisle Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and tournaments. Registration fees vary. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070.

FESTEVAL DES VAMPYRE, May 6-7 NV

This convention will be held at the Silver Nugget Casino Pavilion in Las Vegas, Nev. Special guest is Mike Tinney. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and a tournament with prizes. Registration: $25. Write to: Festeval Des Vampyre, PO. Box 80537, Las Vegas NV 89180.

ROBINSON'S WORLD I, May 6-7 PA

This convention will be held at the Central House Hotel in Beach Lake, Penn. Guests include artists Glenn Boyd and Al Williamson. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a karate demonstration, a mock skirmish put on by the SCA, and a hackeysack tournament. Registration: $5 per day plus game fees. Write to: John Robinson, 1311 West St., Honesdale PA 18481.

EAST COAST HOBBY SHOW '95
May 19-21 PA

This convention will be held at the Fort Washington Expo Center in Philadelphia, Pa. Events include model railroading, radio control games, models, die-casts, kites, miniatures, collectibles, slot cars, and rocketry. Friday, May 19, is for the trade only. Saturday and Sunday, May 20th and 2lst, are open to the public. Write to: Scott Pressman, East Coast Hobby Show, 4400 North Federal Highway, Suite 210, Boca Raton FL 33431.

OASIS 8, May 19-21 FL

This convention will be held at the Orlando North Hilton in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Guests include Alan Dean Foster, Barclay Shaw, Mark Rogers, and Ben Bova. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, an art show and auction, panels, con suite, dealers, and a charity auction. Registration: $20 preregistered; $25 on site. Write to: Oasis, PO. Box 940992, Maitland FL 32792.

ECLIPSE '95 May, 26-28 MO

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Expo Center in Columbia, MO. Guests include Margaret Weis, Tom Dowd, and John Tibbits. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, costume contest, figure painting contest, masquerade show, and charity auction. Registration: $18 (RPGA® Network members $15) preregistered: $20 (RPGA members $18) on site: One day pass is $8. Write to: The Cheshire Cat, 27 N. l0th, Columbia MO 65201.

LEHICON 5, May 26-28 PA

This convention will be held at the Allentown Hilton in Allentown, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, demonstrations, dealers, a painted miniatures contest, a raffle, and an all-you-can-eat banquet. Registration: $15 for whole weekend; $10 for Sat; $6 for Fri or Sun only. Write to: LEHICON 5, PO. Box 556, Horsham PA 19044.

STRATEGICON '95, May 26-29 CA

This convention will be held at the LAX Airport Hyatt in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include flea markets, dealers, an auction, seminars, and demonstrations. Registration: $25 preregistered: $30 on site. Write to: STRATEGICON, PO. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849.

GAMESCAUCUS II '95, May 26-29 CA

This convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, costume contest, painting contests, a flea market, and movies. Registration: $25 before May 15; $30 thereafter. GM registration is $10 before May 15. Write to: TriGaming Associates, PO. Box 27634, Concord CA 94527-0634.

CONMAN 003, June 2-4 NH

This convention will be held at the Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn in Manchester, N.H. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Registration: $18 preregistered; $23 on site. Prices vary for individual days. Write to: Jonathan McCosh, 59 Onway Lake Rd., Raymond NH 03077.

MOBI-CON '95, June 9-11 AL

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P.S. If you've already sent in your Early Bird Registration, you don't need to send this. Give it to a friend. Your Information Packet will automatically be mailed in May!

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Inn Downtown in Mobile, Alabama. Guests include Margaret Weis, Don Perrin, and Douglas Niles. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, costume contest, art show, auction, and dealers. Write to: MOBI-CON, PO. Box 161257, Mobile AL 36616.

BEN CON '95, June 22-25 CO

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Lakewood, Colorado. Guests include Margaret Weis. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show and a blood drive. Write to: RMBGA, PO. Box 19232, Boulder CO *80308.*

D-DAY, June 22-25 CA

This convention will be held at Game Towne in Carlsbad, Calif. This is the 2nd Annual San Diego County Board Game Championships. Events include tournaments, miniatures gaming, and painting contests, and prizes. Write to: D-DAY Game Towne, 2933 Roosevelt, Carlsbad CA 92008.

ARCHON 19, June 23-25 IL

This convention will be held at the Collinsville Gateway Center and Collinsville Holiday Inn, Collinsville Ill. Guests include Jack Williamson, Doug Chaffee, Sam Moskowitz, First Fandom, and A.E. Van Vogt. Events include role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Write to: ARCHON 19, PO. Box 483, Chesterfield MO 63006.

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GRYPH CON '95, April 1-2 *

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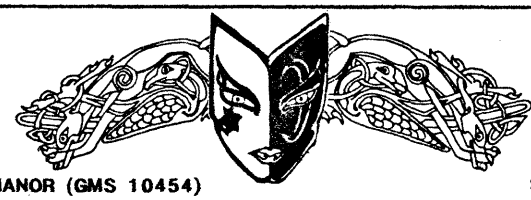

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Paths of Power

by Wolfgang Buar
& Steve Kurtz

Artwork by Wm. Michael Mott

Khenvorm Rallister, called the Gaunt, had worked long hours on the paths of magic, and the road was growing easier the further he travelled it. Today had given him a chance to prove his skills with a petrification spell of his own invention. He looked out of his tower at the results; twelve goblins serving as lawn ornaments, faces frozen in expressions of stony horror. His colleagues at the Guild of Seven Stars had helped him walk the Path of Stone, just as they had helped his first steps on the Path of Lesser Fire Magics. With luck and hard work, soon he would be a master of all the elements, and ready to challenge that old fool Anselm the Bald for the Guildmaster's chair. He smiled quietly to himself; no one at the Guild knew that the secret ways of necromancy had fallen to his superior intellect. They thought they had taught him all his tricks at the Seven Stars, but his mastery of the Reapers Road would be an unpleasant surprise for anyone foolish enough to oppose him. . . .

A variant magic system for the AD&D® game

In most AD&D game campaigns, magic is organized into schools, colleges of magic that feature related spells such as charms, alterations, or illusions. Each mage can choose to learn any spell he finds, of any school. Specialist wizards can memorize more spells each day, at the price of being forever barred from all spells of certain schools. The current rules don't allow for any variation from these two patterns—but there is another path that a wizard character can follow.

This article describes a new set of rules to govern magic in AD&D game campaigns. It allows a mage the best of both worlds; depending on the choices he makes when he begins studying magic, an archmage may be a specialist, a generalist, or may end up somewhere in between. The spells he chooses early on determine what spells he gains in the future. Path magic—also called pattern magic, step magic, or web magic—operates by mimicking the learning process. Mages don't just jump randomly from spell to spell; they choose and then pursue paths of power that channel their options.

In the current rules, each spell is learned in isolation, with no connection to a larger picture. Magic loses some of its wonder because it operates just as reliably and simply as a hammer or any other tool. Variant rules based on spell points (sometimes called mana) fail for the same reason; they draw no connections between spells. But magic isn't a tool; it's an art, a system of interwoven knowledge and skills. This article reinforces that fact and restores a sense of progression to your fantasy role-playing setting.

In addition to improving the logic of the rules, grouping similar spells in sequence gives players a way to discuss spells in character: "Well, once we saw that Marzak of the Azure Lightning had mastered the seventh step of the Storm Path, we knew his magic could be the death of us all, so we pretended to surrender, and then . . ."

Paths are bodies of knowledge that are kept in colleges, where the initial stepping stones are passed down from masters to students. Colleges are founded to pursue certain forms of magic; to follow a path, a mage either must research each step on his own or join a guild or college. Because each mage's guild is devoted to certain paths, the DM can limit player choices in a logical way ("They don't teach the Path of the Mind at the Guild of Seven Stars"), but this also gives the player a chance to either accept the DM's ruling ("I guess I'll keep going to the guild anyway") or take on new goals for more quests and adventures. ("We need to find another guild.")

Learning magic step by step

What are the paths of power? In the game, they are sequences of related spells that must be learned in a particular order, from lowest to highest level. If a path contains more than one spell of a certain level, the mage only needs to learn one of those spells in order to progress along the path (but she may learn more than one spell of a certain level on a given path if she so desires).

In this system of magic, each step on the path of power depends on understanding the principles behind previous steps; that is, a mage never can learn a spell if he does not understand the previous spells on the same path. For this reason, spells are arranged in sequences of required learning, like the rungs of a ladder or the steps on a staircase. For instance, before a mage on the path of Greater Fire Magic can cast a ***fireflow*** spell (third level), he must be able to cast at least one of the three second-level spells preceding ***fireflow*** on this path: ***Agannazar's scorcher, burning hands,*** or ***pyrotechnics.***

This system might seem too constricting, forcing choices, a straitjacket for mages. However, there are advantages to pursuing magic along paths. In fact, it opens many choices as well, for a mage on a path may always automatically find information about the next spell on a path when he reaches the experience level that allows him to cast it. No more need to rummage through dusty tomes with all the dignity of a looter on a battlefield; no need for a player to depend on a DM's whim for the spells he wants; no need for the DM to drop scrolls and spell books "conveniently" into every adventure.

Simply put, the mage rolls the percentage chance to learn a spell whenever he wishes (assuming he has access to that level of spell). If a path is frustrated in one direction (he fails the roll for a prerequisite spell), he may be able to approach it from another direction (if the path contains more than one spell of the same level), or he may try again to learn the next spell when he gains another level.

Paths of power that contain four or more spells are commonly called "roads," but in general there is no system for naming paths. Many of the paths of power described below are given different names in different lands: the Trickster's Road is known as Loki's Path among the Norse, and Hermes' Path near Mount Olympus. Be creative in choosing your own names and your own forks in the roads.

Greater and lesser paths

All paths belong to one of two categories, greater or lesser. The distinction between the two is simply a matter of whether a path includes one or more first-level spells. Greater paths, the ones that contain first-level spells, are the paths that all mages must start on. Their names are printed in bold type in the lists of paths given later in this article.

The shorter paths that begin with higher-level spells are referred to as lesser paths, for their forms of magic are not as simple or as extensive as the greater paths. Only more powerful mages travel these paths, since they include no first-level spells. Lesser paths are printed in bold italic type in the lists below.

Skipping steps

As a wizard progresses along a path, he builds a base of knowledge, formulas, and techniques for the magic of the path. Once he knows spells from two or more consecutive spell levels on a path, he may skip one step farther along on the path. For example, a wizard on the Eagle's Road already knows ***feather fall*** (first level) and ***ride the wind*** (second level). He may then skip one step (the third-level ***fly*** spell) and learn ***spectral*** wings (fourth level).

Only one spell level can be skipped on any path. However, it is possible to go back and fill in a step that had been skipped earlier. In the example, the wizard could learn fly after originally skipping it in favor of ***spectral*** wings, and then, if he so chose, he could skip another step farther along the path—passing over ***vortex,*** for instance, and learning ***Bloodstone's spectral steed*** as his next spell on this path.

Interesting connections

In one sense, path magic is simply an extension and refinement of the schools of magic. However, this interpretation oversimplifies and misses the system's broader usefulness for DMs and players. Sure, some paths represent the core spells of the various schools; it's only logical, since the spells of each school are derived from the same arcane tradition. But paths link the spells of a school together (for instance, the Path of Deception described below covers much of the heart of the school of illusion), and also link together spells from completely unrelated schools (as in the Path of Shadows or the Path of the Drow). Paths can make more interesting connections than schools can: for instance, the Dragon's Road mimics the powers of many dragons, and the Path of the Drow includes many of the powers of the dark elves, as well as their spider magics.

How many paths can a mage follow?

The number of paths a mage can travel on depends on both his experience level and his Intelligence. Path magic requires a new set of assumptions about how many spells a mage can learn. The Intelligence Table in the ***Player's Handbook*** defines the maximum number of spells of a certain level that a wizard character can know.

But spells in paths are not neatly arranged by level; they cross and intersect and clog that system.

The number of paths a specialist wizard can follow is a more complex issue. Generally, there aren't any specialists of path magic, since the paths themselves set limits and force a mage to specialize by limiting what types of spells he can learn and cast. The bonuses for mastering a path provide an additional incentive to master just specialized paths of magic.

However, if the DM and players prefer to keep specialists in the campaign, a specialist retains his normal bonuses (he may memorize one additional spell of each level he is capable of learning about) but he can learn fewer paths at any given level than a generalist (a mage) can. Spells from opposition schools are still off limits; this may prevent the specialist from gaining mastery of some paths. Opposition paths are beyond the scope of this article.

Table A below lists the number of paths that a mage or a specialist of a certain experience level can follow (i.e., learn spells from). Table B gives bonuses to this number according to the wizard's Intelligence score (and it also includes the "Max. # of Spells/Lvl" and "Chance to Learn Spell" columns from the Intelligence Table in the Player's Handbook, for convenience). For example, a mage (not a specialist) of 10th level with a 16 Intelligence can learn spells from up to 12 different paths (9 for being 10th level, +3 for his Int score).

Table A: Number of Paths/Level

Level of Wizard	Max. # Paths for Mage	Max. # Paths for Specialist
1	3	2
2	3	2
3	4	3
4	4	3
5	5	4
6	5	4
7	6	5
8	7	5
9	8	6
10	9	7
11	10	8
12	11	9
13	12	10
14	13	11
15	14	12
16	15	13
17	16	14
18	18	15
19	20	16
20	22	18
21	25	20
22	30	22
23	35	25
24	40	30
25	All	35
26	All	40
27	All	All
28	All	All
29	All	All

Table B: Bonus Paths for Intelligence

Wizard's Int.	Bonus Paths	Max. # Spells/ Levels	Chance to Learn Spell
9	0	6	35%
10	0	7	40%
11	+1	7	45%
12	+1	7	50%
13	+1	9	55%
14	+2	9	60%
15	+2	11	65%
16	+3	11	70%
17	+3	14	75%
18	+4	18	85%
19	+5	All	95%
20	+5	All	96%
21	+6	All	97%
22	+7	All	98%
23	+8	All	99%
24	+9	All	100%
25	+10	All	100%

Completing a path

If a wizard learns every spell in a path, the path is said to be completed, and it no longer counts against his maximum allowable number of paths. This rule makes archmages very powerful indeed, because they can learn more spell paths by completing prior ones, thus dodging the "Max. # Paths" limits of Table A. In addition, they can learn new paths very quickly (just by making an unbroken series of successful "% to learn" rolls), much more quickly than a traditional mage could gather all the formulae from spell books and grimoires hidden in obscure corners of the campaign. In general, though, paths become less and less limiting at higher levels, since the archmage knows almost everything is there is to know about the arcane arts anyway; new paths are less challenging because of their similarities to spells he has already studied and mastered.

Forgetting steps

Powerful mages on a path may know so much about a certain set of spells that they have nothing more to learn on that road. They also may know so many basic spells that they cannot begin any new paths because of Intelligence or level limits on the number of spells they can learn. One way around the problem is to simply forget the first steps on other paths; once a mage has mastered the simplest forms of magic, he may not need access to those spells any longer. Unlike in the standard AD&D system, this means that spells can be removed from a mage's repertoire.

Forgetting part of a spell path requires spells on that path; only one spell can be forgotten, and it must be the lowest-level spell on the path. Forgetting a spell eliminates all knowledge of the spell from the mage's grimoires (or memory, see "New system" below) and opens a spell slot. Forgotten spells do not count against a mage when he attempts to skip steps at the high-level end of the path.

Forking paths

When paths of power intersect, the wizard learning the paths has three choices: he may continue to follow only the path he began with, ignoring the intersection; he can switch from one path to the other, abandoning the chance of any further progress on the first path; or he can pursue both paths by declaring that he will follow a forking path. These forking paths offer a wizard more options than just a straight line because he can learn spells from either path as he gains more levels, but each "branch" of the fork still counts as a separate path for purposes of determining how many paths a wizard can follow.

Some spells are listed on more than one path; there's more than one way to learn many of the arts of magic, after all. Spells that intersect at the crossroads of two or more paths are called nexus spells. First-level spells are never nexus spells. To jump the track and switch from one path to another at a nexus point, the mage must know about the existence of both paths. Once he switches tracks on a forked path, he can no longer skip any spells beyond the nexus spell; this is only part of the price he pays for forking his path. If he abandons one path entirely (either by forgetting or completing it), he may skip spells on the second forking path normally.

Two-way travel

Although paths are generally meant to be followed from beginning to end (from lowest-level spell to highest-level spell), there is nothing to prevent a wizard from "backtracking" to learn a lower-level spell he did not already know. In fact, this is what happens when a wizard fills in a step along a path that he had earlier skipped (see "Skipping steps" above). The same sort of "filling in" can be done for the sake of picking up a spell that didn't have to be learned earlier (in the case of a path containing more than one spell of a certain level), and for the sake of acquiring lower-level spells along a path that the wizard began to follow at a nexus point (see Forking paths above). A wizard may not often find it useful to engage in this backtracking, but it can be done if she so desires.

Paths of power

In the following lists, the spells in each path are given in the order they must be learned. Greater paths are indicated in **bold** type; lesser paths are in bold *italic* type. The level of a spell is indicated by the number in parentheses following it.

Unless otherwise indicated, a spell is from the Player's Handbook. Spells identified as "new" are described later in this article. Spells from the ***Tome of Magic*** are indicated with an asterisk (*). Other sources are abbreviated as follows: AA = ***Arabian Adventures*** rule book; BN = ***The Complete Book of Necromancers;*** CD = the ***City of Delights*** boxed set; CW = ***The Complete Wizard's Handbook;*** DU = the ***Drow of the Underdark*** accessory; FA = ***FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures*** hardbound book; PL = ***Planes of Law*** boxed set; SH = ***The Complete Sha'ir's***

Handbook; and SoL = the ***Secrets of the Lamp*** sourcebox.

Alchemist's Road: ***metamorphose liquids**** (1), ***Alamir's fundamental breakdown* (3), hatch the stone from the egg* (7), homunculus shield* (8), glorious transmutation* (9)***

Archer's Road: ***catapult*** (1, FA), ***magic missile (1), Melf's acid arrow (2), Melf's minute meteors (3), acid bolt (4,*** DU), ***missile mastery (4,*** FA)

Archmage's Road: ***close path (2,*** new), ***sense shifting* (2), vocalize (2,*** CW), ***alacrity* (3), augmentation I* (3), far reaching I* (3), squaring the circle* (3), dilation I* (4), far reaching II* (4), Mordenkainen's celerity* (4), seal path (4,*** new), ***far reaching III* (5), augmentation II* (6), dilation II* (6), burn path (7,*** new)

Artificer's Path: ***detect metals and minerals*** (1, SoL), ***mending*** (l), ***Nystul's magical aura (1), analyze device (3,*** SH), ***duplicate (4,*** CW), ***mechanical disruption (4,*** SH), ***enchant an item (6), reconstruction (6,*** FA), ***permanency (8), spell engine (8,*** FA)

Bard's Path: ***alarm*** (l), ***ventriloquism (1), deafness (2), ghost pipes (2,*** FA), ***magic mouth (2), shout (4), Leomund's lamentable belabourment (5), great shout (8,*** FA), ***wail of the banshee* (9)***

Beggar's Path: ***duplicate (4,*** CW), ***minor creation (4), fabricate (5), major creation (5), limited wish (7), wish (9)***

Bigby's Path: ***spectral hand (1), flying fist (2,*** FA), ***Caligarde's claw (4,*** FA), ***Bigby's interposing hand (5), Bigby's forceful hand (6), Bigby's grasping hand (7),*** Bigby's clenched fist ***(8), Bigby's crushing hand (9)***

Black Road: ***blindness (2), blur (2), darkness 15' radius (2), blacklight (3,*** FA), ***power word blind (8)***

Breaker's Road: ***shatter (2), disintegrate (6), crystalbrittle (9)***

Chromatic Path: ***color spray*** (l), ***chromatic orb*** (1, CW), ***hypnotic pattern (2), rainbow pattern (4), prismatic spray (7), Gunther's kaleidoscopic strike* (8), prismatic wall (8), prismatic sphere (9)***

Councillor's Road: ***hypnotism*** (l), ***suggestion (3), dominate (5), mass suggestion (6)***

Dragon's Road: ***sleep*** (1), ***forget (1), ray of enfeeblement (1), strength (2), hold person (3), snapping teeth (3,*** CW), ***suggestion (3), hold monster (5), mind fog* (5), dragon scales (6,*** CW), ***eyebite (6), steal enchantment* (7)***

Eagle's Road: ***feather fall*** (1), ***Murdock's feathery flyer**** (1), ***ride the wind* (2), fly (3), spectral wings (4,*** FA), ***vortex* (5), Bloodstone's spectral steed (6), airboat* (8)***

Elemental Road: ***elemental guide (2,*** SoL), ***elemental form (4,*** SoL), ***protection from the elements (4,*** SoL), ***conjure elemental (5), command element (7,*** SoL), ***elemental aura* (9)***

Enchanter's Path: ***charm person (1), friends (1), dire charm (3,*** FA), ***fire charm (4), charm monster (4), domination (5), charm plants (7), mass charm (8), virus charm (9,*** FA)

Forceful Path: ***wall of force (5), forcecage (7), imprisonment (9)***

Frozen Road: ***bind (2), hold person (3), hold undead (3), stop (4,*** DU), ***hold monster (5), statue (7), temporal stasis (9)***

Giant's Path: ***enlarge*** (1), ***plant growth (4), animal growth (5)***

Gray Road, or the Skulking Path: ***cloak from undead (2,*** FA), ***invisibility (2), invisibility 10' radius (3), improved invisibility (4), mislead (6), mass invisibility (7)***

Greater Fire Magic, or the Smoke Road: ***affect normal fires*** (1), ***Agannazar's scorcher (2,*** FA), ***burning hands (2), pyrotechnics (2), fireflow* (3), fire aura (4,*** CW), ***fire charm (4), fire gate (4,*** FA), ***fire shield (4), wall of fire (4), Forest's fiery constrictor* (6), Malec-Keth's flame fist* (7), meteor swarm (9)***

Hangman's Road: ***chill touch*** (l), ***feign death (3), paralyze (3,*** FA), ***vampiric touch (3), enervation (4),*** death spell (6), reincarnation (6), finger of death (7), energy drain (9)

Hourglass or Timekeeper's Road: ***haste (3), slow (3), stop (4,*** DU), ***extension I (4), extension II (5), extension III (6), time stop (9)***

Joining Path: ***backlash (4,*** DU), ***Bloodstone's frightful joining* (7), death link*** (8, FA)

King's Road: ***Tenser's floating disk (1), blink (3), dimension door (4), Bowgentle's fleeting journey (5,*** FA), ***teleport (5), gemjump (7,*** FA), ***teleport without error (7), gateway (8,*** FA), ***worldwalk (9,*** FA)

Knight's Road: ***armor*** (1), ***mount*** (1), ***shield (1), invisible mail (3,*** CW), ***phantom steed (3), spirit armor* (3), stoneskin (4), wall of iron (4), dragon scales (6,*** CW)

Lesser Fire Magic: ***fire burst**** (l), ***flaming sphere (2), fireball (3), shroud of flame (5,*** FA), ***delayed blast fireball (7), meteor swarm (9)***

Medusa's Road, or the Road of True Sight: ***gaze reflection (1), know alignment (2), eyebite (6), glassee (6), true seeing (6), glassteel(8)***

Misty Road: ***wall of fog*** (1), ***stinking cloud (2), fog cloud (2), hold vapor (3,*** FA), ***solid fog (4), cloudkill (5), mind fog* (5), death fog (6), incendiary cloud (8)***

Otiluke's Road: ***Otiluke's resilient sphere (4), Otiluke's freezing sphere (6), Otiluke's telekinetic sphere (8)***

Path of Counterspells: ***avert evil eye (1,*** AA), ***dispel magic (3), dispel mirage (3,*** AA), ***Otiluke's dispelling screen (4,*** CW), ***remove curse (4), force shapechange (5,*** CW), ***repulsion (6), ruby ray of reversal (7,*** FA), ***Mordenkainen's disjunction (9), spellstrike (9,*** FA)

Path of Curses: ***minor malison* (3), watery double* (3), dread whisper (4,*** SH), ***greater malison* (4), blade of doom (6,*** FA), ***geas (6), suffocate* (7), Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting* (8)***

Path of Deception: ***phantasmal force*** (1), ***improved phantasmal force (2), spectral force (3), advanced illusion (5), programmed illusion (6)***

Path of the Mind: ***ESP (2), levitation (2), iron mind (3,*** CW), ***feeblemind (5), telekinesis (5), disintegrate (6), Rary's telepathic bond (6,*** CW), ***mind blank (8), dismind (9,*** FA)

Path of Shadows: ***Lorvoleim's creeping shadow* (3), night's jambiya (3,*** SH), ***wraithform (3), shadow monsters (4), shadowstrike (4,*** SH), ***demi-shadow monsters (5), demi-shadow monsters (5), shadow magic (5), summon shadow (5), shadow veil (6,*** SoL), ***demi-shadow magic (6), Lorvoleim's shadowy transformation* (6), shades (6), turnshadow (6,*** FA), ***shadow walk (7), shadowcat* (7), shadow form*** (8, CW)

Path of Terror: ***spook (1), scare (2), fear (4), phantasmal killer (4), weird (9)***

Prophet's Path: ***past life* (2), clairaudience (3), clairvoyance (3), halo of eyes (4,*** CW), ***dream (5), vision (7), foresight (9)***

Road of Cups: ***protection from evil (1), protection from hunger and thirst*** (1, CW), ***filter (2,*** CW), ***protection from paralysis* (2), protection from evil 10' radius (3), dispel magic (3), ward against undead (3,*** FA), ***fire shield (4), Ilyykur's mantle (4,*** FA), ***minor globe of invulnerability (4), minor spell turning* (4), Spendelard's chaser (4,*** FA), ***invulnerability to normal weapons (5,*** CW), ***ironguard (5,*** FA), ***anti-magic shell (6), globe of invulnerability (6), invulnerability to magical weapons (6,*** CW), ***spelltrap (7,*** FA), ***spell turning (7), fear ward (8,*** CW), ***Serten's spell immunity (8), spell invulnerability (9,*** FA), ***Mordenkainen's disjunction (9)***

Road of Pentacles: ***find familiar (1), call society (2,*** SH), ***choke (2,*** CW), ***summon swarm (2), ritual strength (3,*** SH), ***monster summoning I (3), genie contract (4,*** SOL), ***monster summoning II (4), summon lycanthrope* (4), dismissal (5), monster summoning III (5), reconnect (5,*** SH), ***oathbinding (5,*** SoL), ***ensnarement (6), monster summoning IV (6), spiritwrack (6,*** PL), ***cacofiend (7,*** PL), ***intensify summoning* (7), monster summoning V (7), binding (8), monster summoning VI (8), gate (9)***

Road of Seals and Wardings: ***hold portal (1), honor mark*** (1, SH), ***Leomund's trap (2), knock (2), web (2), explosive runes (3), nightscar (3,*** FA), ***sepia snake sigil (3), proof from teleportation (3,*** FA), ***encrypt (4,*** FA), ***firetrap (4), jackal ward (4,*** SH), ***watchware (4,*** FA), ***safeguarding* (5), secure (5,*** FA), ***Von Gasik's refusal* (5), guards and wards (6), tattoo of power (6,*** SH), ***Khelben's warding whip (7,*** FA), ***symbol (8)***

Road of Soul's Release: ***sleep (1), forget (2), waves of weariness*** (FA, 3), ***emotion (4), chaos (5), magic jar (5)***

Road of Staves: ***decastave (2,*** FA), ***icelance (3,*** FA), ***thunderlance (4,*** FA), ***thunder staff* (4), magic staff* (5), create soundstaff (7,*** AA)

Road of Swords: ***scatterspray (1,*** FA), ***bladethirst (2,*** FA), ***flame arrow (3), enchanted weapon (4), Tenser's transformation (6), Mordenkainen's sword (7)***

Road of True Names: ***lower resistance* (5), eyebite (6), power word silence (6,*** FA), ***spiritwrack (6,*** PL), ***power word stun (7), true name (7,*** PL), ***binding (8),***

power word blind (8), trap the soul (8), power word kill (9)

Sage's or Diviner's Road: ***comprehend languages*** (1), ***detect disease*** (1, CW), ***divining rod*** (1, CW), ***identify (1), detect magic (1), detect undead*** (1), ***divining rod (1, CW), know school*** (1, FA), ***detect good/evil*** (2), ***detect invisibility (2), detect life (2,*** CW), ***know alignment (2), locate object (2), detect scrying (4), locate creature* (4), magic mirror (4), contact other plane (5), know value (5,*** CW), ***legend lore (6)***

Servant's Path: ***unseen servant*** (1), ***Quimby's enchanting gourmet (2,*** FA), ***summon swarm (2), phantom steed (3), conjure animals (6), Mordenkainen's faithful hound (5), invisible stalker (6), spectral guard (7,*** FA)

Shapeshifter's Path: ***change self(1), alter self (2), fist of the adder (2,*** SH), ***polymorph self (4), polymorph other (4), force shapechange (5,*** CW), ***claws of the umber hulk* (6), Tenser's transformation (6), tentacles (6,*** CW), ***polymorph any object (8), shape change (9)***

Sheltering Path: ***Leomund's tiny hut (3), Leomund's secure shelter (4), Mordenkainen's private sanctum (5,*** CW), ***Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion (7), estate transference* (9)***

Shining Path: ***dancing lights*** (1), ***light (1), continual light (2), darkness 15' radius (2), Nchaser's glowing globe (3,*** FA), ***Presper's moonbow (5,*** FA), ***sunburst (8,*** FA), ***Elminster's effulgent epuration (9,*** FA)

Silver Road: ***rope trick (2), blink (3), phase trap (4,*** FA), ***Leomund's secret chest (5), passwall (5), duo-dimension (7), vanish (7), phase door (7), astral spell (9)***

Speaker's Path: ***comprehend languages (1), fool's speech* (3), tongues (3), sending (5), Drawmij's instant summons (7), demand (8), succor (9)***

Stone Road: ***fist of stone**** (1), ***Maximillian's earthen grasp* (2), Maximillian's stony grasp* (3), dig (4), stoneskin (4), turn pebble to boulder* (4), wall of stone (5), stone shape (5), move earth (6), sink (8)***

Storm Road: ***shocking grasp*** (1), ice ***knife (2,*** CW), ***whispering wind (2), gust of wind (3), lightning bolt (3), wind wall (3), ice storm (4), wall of ice (4), wind breath (4,*** CW), ***cone of cold (5), chain lightning (6), control weather (6), acid storm* (7)***

Trickster's Road: ***grease*** (1), ***jump (1), spider climb*** (1), ***taunt*** (1), ***fool's gold (2), Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter (2), chastise (3,*** SH), fool's speech* (3), ***fumble (4), reverse gravity (7), Otto's irresistible dance (8)***

Twin's Road: ***change self(1), mirror image (2), alter self (2), duplicate (4,*** CW), ***plague*** (4, FA), ***guise of the yak-man (5,*** SH), ***heat mirage (5,*** SH), ***seeming (5), project image (6), simulacrum (7), clone (8)***

Twisting ***Road: glitterdust (2), misdirection (2), nondetection (3), distance distortion (5), false vision (5), shadow door (5), mirage arcana (6), mislead (6), sequester (7), vanish (7), maze (8)***

Veiled Path: ***delude (3), Laerel's dancing dweomer (3,*** FA), ***hallucinatory terrain (4), vacancy (4), passwall (5), seeming (5), permanent illusion (6), veil (6), sequester*** (7), ***screen (8)***

Water Road: ***lasting breath**** (1), ***water breathing (3), airy water (5), lower water (6), part water (6)***

Wizard's Road: ***cantrip*** (1), ***conjure spell component**** (1), ***copy (1,*** CW), ***read magic (1), deeppockets (2), wizard lock (2), wizard mark (2), dispel magic (3), illusionary script (3), infravision (3), item (3), secret page (3), wizard sight* (3), divination enhancement* (4), Rary's mnemonic enhancer (4), wizard eye (4), Khazid's procurement* (5), contingency (6), geas (6), Mordenkainen's lucubration (6), chain contingency* (9), Elminster's evasion (9,*** FA), ***Mordenkainen's disjunction (9)***

Wild Road, or the Road of Chaos: ***Hornung's guess**** (1), ***Nahal's reckless dweomer**** (1), ***patternweave**** (1), ***chaos shield* (2), Hornung's baneful deflector* (2), Nahal's nonsensical nullifier* (2), alternate reality* (3), fireflow* (3), fool's speech* (3), confusion (4), there/not there* (4), unluck* (4), chaos (5), vortex* (5), waveform* (5), wildshield* (6), wildstrike* (6), Hornung's surge selector* (7), spell shape* (7), Hornung's random dispatcher*** (8), ***wildzone* (8), stabilize* (9), wildfire* (9), wildwind* (9)***

Path magic in the campaign

In campaign terms, path magic promotes magic as a discipline, an art learned stage by stage. DMs can tailor paths to suit their own tastes and the needs of the campaign, and powerful spells are the direct result of earlier studies. No mage can simply learn ***disintegrate*** without learning (for instance) ***ESP iron mind,*** and ***telekinesis*** first, since those spells precede ***disintegrate*** on the Path of the Mind.

Because the initial selection of paths will determine many of the mage's future spell choices, the player and DM should consider the character's first-level spells very carefully.

Table C: Daily Paths

Level of Wizard	No. of Paths Available/Day
1	1
2	2
3	2
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	4
8	5
9	5
10	6
11	7
12	8
13	8
14	9
15	10
16	11
17	12
18	13
19	13
20	14

New system

In addition to the sequenced learning requirements of path magic, you may choose to offer mages a new system of casting spells as well, Normally, mages simply master the spells in their grimoires, memorize them, and cast them based on their level. Path magic allows for some interesting variations, if both the players and the DM agree.

The new system of spell-casting does not call on a complicated mana system; a wizard may still cast the same number of spells as given in the basic rules, but he does not memorize them ahead of time. Instead, each day the wizard declares which of the paths that he studies he will use. For that day, the mage must cast spells from those paths only. The number of daily paths is given on Table 4. This system gives a mage flexibility within constraints.

New spells

The following spells affect paths directly, forming by themselves a sort of "Path of Paths." Because they strike at the root of a path wizard's power, they should be extremely rare—and extremely feared. Any mage using them indiscriminately will soon find himself hunted by other wizards who want to see him stopped.

Close path (Abjuration)

Level: 3
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 day
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 wizard
Saving Throw: Neg.

This lesser magic closes a mage's access to a path he normally can follow. This bars his access to one path (chosen randomly), for the remainder of the day. Spells already memorized are not forgotten; the wizard simply can't access them. The caster does not know which spell or spells are barred from the target (if any). After 24 hours pass, the target may memorize and cast spells of the closed path again normally.

The material component of the close ***path*** spell is a small silver key worth at least 50 gp, which must be broken during the casting.

Seal path (Abjuration) Reversible

Level: 5
Range: 10'/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent until dispelled
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 wizard
Saving Throw: Neg.

The wizard affected by this spell can learn no more spells in a path (chosen by the caster from among those the caster knows the target follows) until the magical roadblock of this spell is removed. If the target wizard fails his saving throw by 4 or more, he also suffers the effects of a ***close path*** spell affecting the same path for the remainder of the day. If the target makes the saving throw by more than 4, he may reflect the spell back at the caster. The caster is entitled to a saving throw against the weakened, reflected spell with a +4 bonus; if he succeeds there is no effect, but if he fails the spell affects him normally. The spell cannot be reflected more than once.

The seal on the chosen path can only be removed by an ***open path*** spell (the reversed form of ***seal path),*** a ***limited wish,*** or a ***wish*** spell. The material component is a shining seal made of a special alloy of lead and mithril. The seal is inscribed with the victim's name or sigil, and its cost is never less than 1,000 gp.

Burn path (Necromancy/Abjuration)

Level: 8
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 8
Area of Effect: 1 wizard
Saving Throw: See below

This powerful destructive magic destroys all knowledge a mage has of one path chosen by the caster. The spells and formulas are all instantly forgotten, memorized spells vanish from the victim's mind, and all spells on that path must be relearned as if the victim never knew them.

The spell's effect cannot be reversed, but if the target's saving throw succeeds, the path is merely sealed as per a ***seal path*** spell. The spell cannot be reflected.

The material component is a thin sheet of beaten gold inscribed with the formula for the spell that serves as the path's starting point; this special scroll costs no less than 3,000 gp. The scroll is magically consumed in the casting.

Path masters

A wizard's expertise with any given path improves if he has mastered the path. To become a master of a path, a wizard must know every single spell available to him in that given path—that is, every spell of a level he can cast. So long as he retains mastery, the master casts all of those spells more effectively. The benefits of mastery are simple: his spells gain a -1 saving throw modifier, a +1 bonus per die of damage, and range, duration, and area of affect are all as if the path master were one level higher than his actual level. He loses mastery only if he chooses not to learn a spell of that path when he gains an experience level, if he fails his roll to learn a spell of the path, or if he chooses to forget or skip a spell.

A wizard may never be a master of more than a single path at any time, but if he fulfills all the requirements for mastery in more than one path, the player may choose which path the wizard is a master of. The wizard may switch his choice of mastery whenever he learns a new spell in either path.

Wiping away paths

As an optional rule, paths that a wizard ignores may atrophy because the skills required are not kept up. Here's the formula: If a wizard has not learned any new spells in a path by the time he finishes the experience level when two or more new steps have become available to him, his skill in that path stalls at the lowest level required to cast the spells he does know. For example, consider a wizard following the Stone Road who has attained 7th level—the point at which he becomes able to cast a fourth-level spell. If that wizard has not learned the third-level spell ***Maximillian's stony grasp*** or either of the fourth-level spells ***stoneskin*** or ***dig*** by the time he reaches 8th level, his progress on that path is forfeited, and thereafter he casts ***fist of stone*** and ***Maximillian's earthen grasp*** (the first- and second-level spells on the path) as if he were only a 3rd-level mage (since he has contented himself with casting only first- and second-level spells from the path). If a third step of spells becomes available and is ignored ***(wall of stone*** or ***stone shape*** in this example), the path is entirely forgotten.

Lost paths

The DM may designate one or more paths as lost, meaning that they are not available to most mages. Paths named after famous mages or monsters are especially good for this. Recovering and restoring such a path may become an adventuring goal for player characters.

Furthermore, particular settings may require their own paths: the provinces of sand, sea, flame, and wind in the AL-QADIM® setting certainly can be the basis of several good paths, because the elemental magics of that setting are even more carefully defined and interwoven than in the AD&D core rules (see "Customized campaign paths" below). The genies' paths can easily be constructed using spells from the ***Secrets of the Lamp*** sourcebox, and elementalist characters will appreciate these paths as well.

In a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, the spells of the many powerful mages should serve as starting points for paths: Elminster's, Snilloc's, and the Simbul's magics are all unique. These paths are given below as examples, but many others could be made to suit individual tastes and the needs of powerful mage characters and the DM's wishes for a campaign.

Bigby's, Leomund's, and Mordenkainen's paths are surely more common in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting—where they were invented—than anywhere else. These individual variations are always up to the DM.

Sample lost paths

Path of the Drow, or Lolth's Road, or Spider Road: ***spidereyes*** (1, DU), ***spider climb*** (1), ***darkness 15' radius (2), skyhook (2,*** DU), ***web (2), dark wings (3,*** DU), ***hand of darkness (3,*** DU), ***infravision (3), passweb (5,*** DU), ***summon spider (6,*** DU), ***vipergout (6,*** DU), ***death spider (8,*** DU), ***black blade of disaster (9,*** DU)

Snilloc's Path: ***Snilloc's snowball (1,*** FA), ***Snilloc's snowball storm (2,*** FA), ***Snilloc's major missile (5,*** FA)

Simbul's Path: ***hypnotize*** (1), ***forget (2), suggestion (3), the Simbul's synostodweomer (7,*** FA), ***steal enchantment* (7)***

While path magic is intended for a traditional fantasy setting, it isn't limited to that style of play. Sure, the lost paths of Toril could include the Road of Southern Magic of the Old Empires, or the magic of the elves of Evermeet, or the lost magic of Myth Drannor, or the forbidden fire magics of the Red Wizards of Thay. But much more exotic roads can be created if there are wizards willing to walk them. The dragons of Athas surely have their own powerful magics of desert survival. The PLANESCAPE™ setting could easily have Roads of Law and Chaos, and a Road of the Abyss. Each world will have its own magical traditions and cultures, but the pattern and system of magic presented here can readily be adapted to suit your preferences. Experiment!

Inherited magic

For long-term campaigns or for developing campaign history, players and DMs may want to consider making magic inheritable, that is, making certain families known for having an aptitude for certain forms of magic. Though this doesn't reveal exactly what spells an NPC wizard has on hand, it does give player characters a general idea of what they can expect-in this sense it functions as a mechanic that presents a sort of NPC reputation to the players. For example, it allows characters to learn a great deal about potential allies or enemies by knowing something about the character's ancestors ("Old Zeb, sure, he's the son of Zackary, who was the son of Geoffry. Everybody knows they're all enchanters, councilors, divining, and dragon mages.") At the DM's option, bards or PCs with the Spellcraft nonweapon proficiency may know the origin, ancestry, and genealogy of many of the paths of power, giving the PCs a valuable clue about what they may be up against.

Although this might seem like an unfair advantage, the knowledge cuts in both directions. After all, these rules are meant to encourage players and DMs to act more like the mages of fantasy literature do. Player characters may be the sons and daughters of well-known lineages, the offspring of a mage's house, with all the expected mage's blood and mage's gifts. As a result, players may be reluctant to reveal their true names to strangers for fear of giving valuable information about the character's skills: and isn't that what fantasy mages are all about?

Creating new paths

Players will soon want their characters to create spell paths of their own, but this is a difficult undertaking for any but the most powerful sorcerers. To create a new path, a PC wizard must list all the elements for the path, that is, all the spells that would comprise it—and the character must be able to cast all of them. The elements of the list must have some common bond: a certain school of magic, the form that the spells all take, their function, the spells' inventor, or the like. If the DM approves, the wizard can begin researching. The cost of "path research" is the total number of spell levels in the path times 1,000 gp, and the time required is one week per each spell level in the path. The percentage chance of success is the mage's level plus his Intelligence, minus the number of spell levels on the road. For example, if an 11th-level mage with Int 18 attempted to create a Path of Ice using the ***Snilloc's*** spells (eight total levels), ***ice storm,*** and ***wall of*** ice (both fourth-level spells), the total levels would be 16, the cost would be 16,000 gp, the total time required would be 16 weeks, and the chance of success would be 11 + 18 - 16 = 13%. Researching paths is a chancy business at best, but a mage can keep trying over and over until he runs out of money.

Usually, a mage will invent a new path only to accommodate newly researched spells; most new spells can simply be assigned to existing paths based on similarity (for instance, a new series of skiing, water walking, and airwalking spells might require a new path). This does not mean that the newly researched spell is immediately available to all other wizards; paths are traditional series of spells, and mages learn of these newly researched spells only slowly, as their inventor and his guild popularize the spells involved. Eventually, when the spell is widely known, it is adopted as part of the path. By then, the inventor is usually long dead.

Customized campaign paths

As samples of detailed, specialized paths for a campaign, examine the following lists for the AL-QADIM setting and the multiple paths for the necromancer. The ***Arabian Adventures*** rule book describes the category of universal spells; these spells are included in the paths presented earlier in this article, as are the more general spells from the ***Complete Sha'ir's Handbook.*** The more specific spell paths detailing the four elemental provinces of Zakhara are listed below.

Province of flame

The Brotherhood's Road: ***burning hands (1), burning sand*** (1, SH), ***fire arrows (2,*** AA), ***fiery fists (2,*** SOL), ***flaming sphere (2), pyrotechnics (2), fireball (3), flame arrow (3), sunscorch (3,*** AA), ***sunfire (4,*** AA), ***Forest's fiery constrictor* (6), delayed blast fireball (7), Malec-Keth's flame fist* (7), sun stone (7,*** AA), ***incendiary cloud (8), conflagration (9,*** AA), ***meteor swarm (9)***

Flame Dancer's Path: ***affect normal fires (1), pyrotechnics (2), smelting (2,*** SOL), ***fireflow* (3), fire shield (4), fire trap (4), wall of fire (4), flameproof (6,*** AA), ***Forest's fiery constrictor* (6), elemental transmogrification (8,*** SH), ***wildfire* (9)***

Firesight Path: ***dancing lights*** (1), ***fire truth (1,*** AA), ***banish dazzle (2,*** AA), ***sun-dazzle (2,*** AA), ***dispel mirage (3,*** AA), fire ***charm (4), sunwarp (4,*** AA), ***fire track (5,*** AA), ***flame of justice (6,*** AA)

Road of the Efreeti: ***elemental guide (2,*** SOL), ***elemental form (4,*** SOL), ***protection from the elements (4,*** SOL), ***enhance fire creature (4, AA), conjure elemental (5), summon fire dragons (6,*** SOL), ***command element (7,*** SOL), ***unleash monolith (8, AA), elemental aura* (9), estate transference* (9)***

Province of sand

Road of Shifting Sands: ***detect metals and minerals*** (1, SOL), ***move sand*** (1, AA), ***sand jambiya*** (1, AA), ***dust curtain (2,*** AA), ***pillar of sand (2,*** AA), ***Maximillian's earthen grasp* (2), entomb (3,*** SOL), ***hissing sand (3,*** AA), ***Maximillian's stony grasp* (2), sand seal (3,*** SH), ***sand tools (3,*** SH), ***sandspray (3,*** SH), ***dig (4), sand cone (4,*** AA), ***sand sword (3,*** AA), ***wall of sand (4,*** FA), ***desert fist (5,*** AA), ***move dune (5,*** AA), ***wall of stone (5), waves of sand (5,*** SH), ***move earth (6), part sand (6,*** AA), ***sand shroud (6,*** AA), ***river of sand (8,*** AA), ***sink (8)***

Glassblower's Path: ***fist of stone**** (1), ***sand quiet (1, AA), burning sands (1, SH), smelting (2,*** SOL), ***whispering sand (3, AA), sandspray (3,*** SH), ***stoneskin (4), liquid earth (5,*** SOL), ***passwall (5), stone shape (5), transmute rock to mud (5), glassee (6), stone to flesh (6), transmute water to dust (6), return to sand (7,*** SH), ***statue (7), Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting* (8), elemental transmogrifiation (8,*** SH), ***glasteel (8), glorious transmutation* (9), crystalbrittle (9)***

Sandman's Path: ***sand slumber*** (1, AA), ***traceless travel*** (1, AA), ***sand shadow (2,*** AA), ***create shade (7,*** AA)

Road of the Dao: ***elemental guide (2,*** SOL), ***enlarge desert creature (2, AA), conjure sand lion (4,*** AA), ***elemental form (4,*** SOL), ***protection from the elements (4,*** SOL), ***conjure elemental (5), command element (7,*** SOL), ***sand worm (8,*** AA), ***unleash monolith (8,*** AA), ***elemental aura* (9), estate transference* (9), sand form (9,*** AA)

Province of the sea

Sea Children's Road: ***cool strength (1,*** AA), ***sea sight*** (1, AA), ***waterbane (1, AA), insatiable thirst* (2), water breathing (3), airy water (5), transmute rock to mud (5), lower water (6), part water (6), transmute water to dust (6), water form (7, AA, cleanse water (8,*** AA), ***life water (9, AA)***

Corsair's Path: ***float (1,*** AA), ***depth warning (2,*** AA), ***true bearing (2, AA),***

stone hull *(3,* AA), ***shatterhull*** *(4,* AA), ***ship shock (5,*** AA), ***ship of fools (6,*** AA)

Mistweaver's Path: ***metamorphose liquids* (1), wall of fog*** (1), ***fog cloud (2), ice storm (4), solid fog (4), wall of ice (4), cone of cold (5), water blast (5,*** AA), ***waveform* (5), elemental transmogrification*** *(8,* SH)

Road of the Marid: ***elemental guide (2,*** SoL), ***converse with sea creatures (3,*** AA), ***strengthen water creature (4,*** AA), ***protection from the elements (4,*** SoL), ***conjure elemental (5), command water spirits (6,*** AA), ***command element (7,*** SoL), ***unleash monolith (8,*** AA), ***maelstrom (9,*** AA), ***elemental aura* (9), estate*** transfer***ence* (9)***

Province of the wind

Wind Mage's Road: ***alter normal winds*** (1, AA), ***lasting breath* (1), wind compass*** (1, AA), ***invisibility (2), whispering wind (2), gust of wind*** (3), ***reveal invisible (3,*** AA), ***air breathing (3), airy water (5), control weather (6), create soundstaff*** (7, AA), ***wildwind* (9), windtomb (9,*** AA)

Windwielder's Path: ***wall of fog (1), fog cloud (2), wall against noise (2,*** AA), ***wind wall (3,*** AA), ***ghost rigging (4,*** AA), ***mirage wall (4,*** AA), ***solid fog (4), wind blade (4,*** AA), ***cloudkill (5), death smoke (5,*** AA), ***shield of winds (5,*** AA), ***death fog (6)***

The Skyrider's Path: ***feather fall*** (1), ***flying jambiya (2,*** AA), ***levitate (2), ride the wind* (2), fly (3), wind shadow (3,*** AA), ***wind carpet (5,*** AA), ***airboat* (8), elemental transmogrification (8,*** SH)

The Djinni's Greater Path: ***elemental guide (2,*** SoL), ***elemental form (4,*** SoL), ***protection from the elements (4,*** SoL), ***conjure elemental (5), invisible stalker (6), summon wind dragons (6,*** AA), ***command element (7,*** SoL), ***unleash monolith (8,*** AA), ***elemental aura* (9), estate transference* (9)***

Necromancy

As elaborated in the ***Complete Book of Necromancers,*** necromantic magic also has its own special feel. This is reflected in the many paths presented below. The core rule books provide a limited selection of necromantic magic, but with the details from the ***Complete Book of Necromancers*** and the necromantic spells of the ***Forgotten Realms Adventures*** and ***Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*** expansions, NPC necromancers gain a much broader selection of spells—and correspondingly broader paths of power.

Bonebinder's Path: ***bone club (3,*** CW), ***skull trap (3,*** BN), ***bone blight (5,*** BN), ***throbbing bones (5,*** CW), ***wall of bones (5,*** CW), ***blackmantle (6,*** CW), ***Grimwald's gray mantle (6,*** FA), ***transmute bone to steel (6,*** BN)

Path of Blood: ***rain of blood (2,*** SH), ***Beltyn's burning blood (4,*** FA), ***animate blood (6,*** SH)

The Reaper's Road: ***chill touch*** (1), ***exterminate*** (1, BN), ***vampiric touch (3), enervation (4), brainkill (4,*** BN), ***death spell (6), dusts of death (6,*** SH), ***finger of death (7), defoliate (8,*** CW), ***symbol of death (8), power word kill (9), death ward (9,*** BN), ***wail of the banshee* (9).***

The Path of Scorn: ***corpse visage*** (1, CW), ***contagion (4), enervation (4), dead man's eyes (6,*** CW), ***suffocate* (7), Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting* (8)***

The Scabrous Road: ***chill touch (1), choke (2,*** CW), ***ghoul touch (2,*** CW), ***spectral hand (2), mummy touch (3,*** FA), ***pain touch (3,*** CW), ***vampiric touch (3), paralyze (3,*** FA), ***mummy*** rot ***(5,*** CW), ***ghoul gauntlet (6,*** BN), ***lich touch (6,*** FA), ***energy drain (9).***

The Spirit Road: ***corpse link*** (1, BN), spectral ***voice*** (1, BN), ***living link (2,*** BN), ***death talisman (3,*** CD), ***spirit armor* (3), feign death (3), hovering skull (3,*** CW), ***skullwatch (3,*** FA), ***empathic wound transfer (4,*** BN), ***improved skull watch (5,*** FA), ***magic jar (5), corpse host (6,*** BN), ***Bloodstone's frightful joining* (7), lifeproof (7,*** AA), ***wound conferral (7,*** BN), ***body link (8,*** CD), ***death link (8,*** FA), ***hide heart (8,*** CD), ***homunculus shield* (8), life force transfer (8,*** BN), ***life force exchange (9,*** BN)

Lifeshielder's Road: ***detect life (2,*** CW), ***living link (2,*** BN), ***delay death (3,*** CW), ***spirit armor* (3), false face (3,*** BN), ***feign death (3), empathic wound transfer (4,*** BN), ***lifesurge (4,*** SH), ***Spendelard's chaser (4,*** FA), ***bone growth (5,*** BN), ***death bump (5,*** SH), ***flesh mirage (5,*** AA), ***graft flesh (5,*** BN), ***Nulathoe's ninemen (5,*** FA), ***reincarnation (6), wound conferral (7,*** BN), ***homunculus shield* (8), life water (9,*** AA)

The Undying Road: ***animate dead animals*** (1, BN), ***skeletal hands (2,*** BN), ***undead mount (2,*** FA), ***bone dance (3), hovering skull (3,*** CW), ***skull trap (3,*** BN), ***skullwatch (3,*** FA), ***summon spirit (4), animate dead (5), improved skullwatch (5,*** FA), ***summon shadow (5), wall of bones (5, CW, Bloodstone's spectral steed* (6), construct undead (6,*** SH), ***ghoul gauntlet (6,*** BN), ***finger of death (7), zombie double (7,*** CW), ***Bloodstone's frightful joining* (7), control undead (7), clone (8), shadow form (8,*** CW), ***master undead (9,*** FA)

Deadbuilder's Path: ***corpselight (1,*** FA), ***cloak undead (2,*** FA), ***embalm (2,*** BN), ***revenance (3,*** FA), ***disguise undead (5,*** FA), ***force shapechange (5,*** CW), ***imbue undead with spell ability (6,*** FA), ***teleport dead (6, FA)***

Deathslayer's Path: ***corpselight*** (1, FA), ***chill touch*** (1), ***hold undead (3), bind undead (5,*** BN)

Ghost-Seeker's Path: ***detect undead (1), locate remains (1,*** BN), ***death recall (2,*** CW), ***detect life (2,*** CW), ***mask of death* (4), summon spirit (4,*** BN), ***contact other plane (5)***

Conclusion

Use these rules to enhance the feel of AD&D game mages, and to broaden the scope of magic in your campaign. Special thanks to Svetozar Fung, Daniel Quaroni, Christian Tapia, Josh Gerner, and Abram Connelly.

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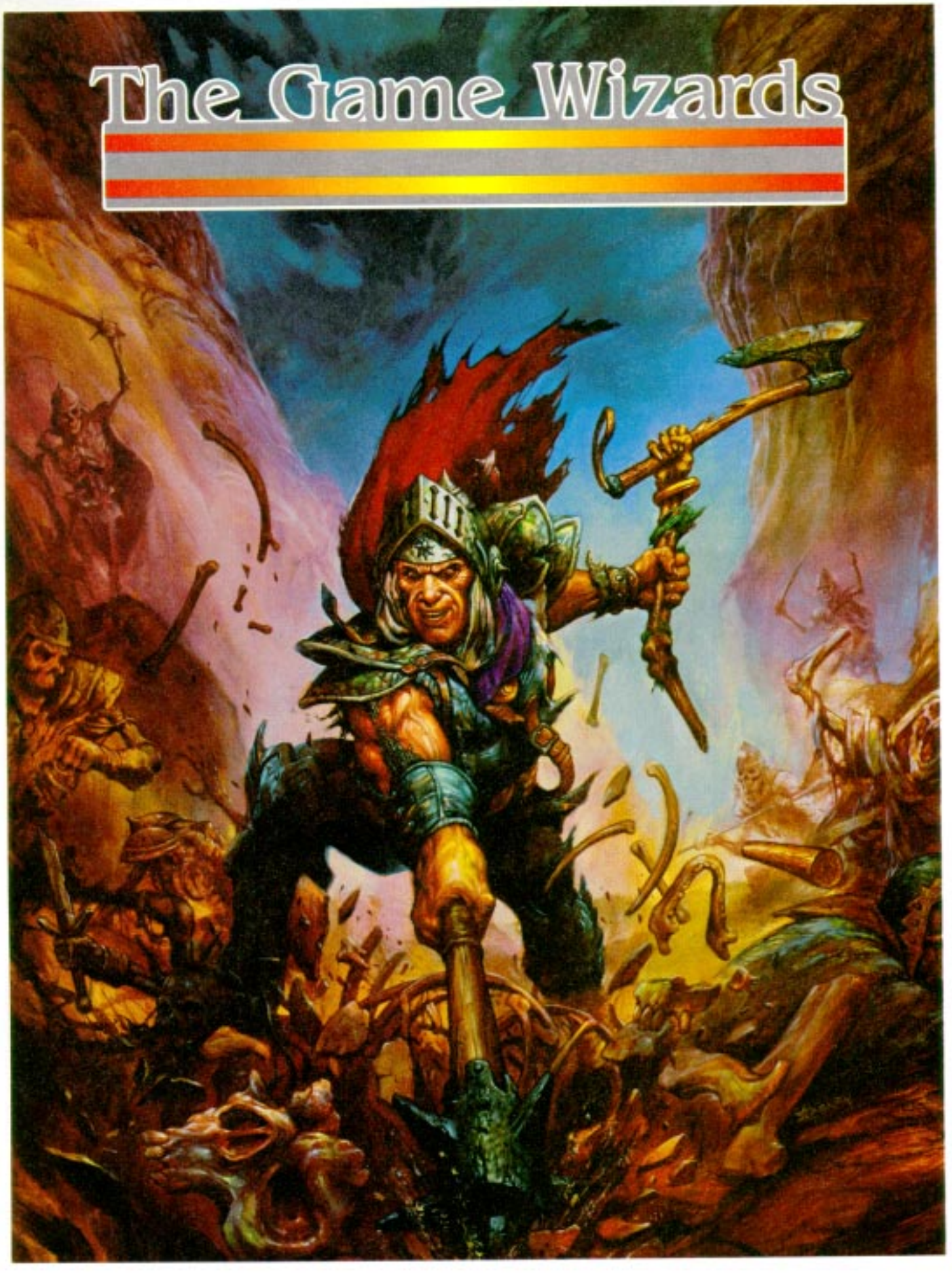

The Game Wizards

PLAYER'S OPTION™ rules preview, Part I: Critical hit tables from the *Combat & Tactics* book

by Rich Baker & Skip Williams

Artwork by Jeff Easley

So you think you know everything there is to know about the AD&D® game. Well then, have you ever heard of a wizard character who could use a sword? How about paladins who cast spells ***before*** 9th level? Do you know about knockdowns, critical hits, or tenth-level magic?

This is just the beginning of what can be found in the PLAYER'S OPTION™ expansion books to the AD&D game. These brand-new hardbound books contain rules, systems, and ideas for your game that have never been published before. The PLAYER'S OPTION books were carefully designed to present sets of rules in easy-to-use modules. You can pick and choose which modules you like and incorporate them in your campaign. Regardless of which ones you decide to use, you'll find that everything works with everything else.

The first of these books, ***Combat & Tactics,*** provides all sorts of new systems that you can incorporate into your AD&D game battles to make them more exciting and move faster and more smoothly, while keeping bookkeeping nightmares to a minimum. When was the last time your 8th-level fighter did anything except plant his feet in front of a monster and trade swings until one or the other of them ran out of hit points? If this sounds all too familiar, you should take a look at ***Combat & Tactics.***

Expanded rules cover critical hits, knockdowns, tactical options, and combat maneuvers such as shield walls, parries, disarms, and more! Complete weapons tables for all eras of play, from the Stone Age through the age of pike and shot, include dozens of new weapons and revised characteristics for old ones.

Just to whet your appetite for ***Combat & Tactics,*** here is an excerpt from the chapter on critical hits. Check it out and try it during your next gaming session. Your players may love you for it, or they may hate you, but they will never think of fighting in the same old way again. ***Combat*** & ***Tactics*** will be on sale in July, 1995.

Fantasy literature is full of mighty blows and grievous wounds that change the course of a battle. Characters such as Beowulf, Robert E. Howard's Conan, or any of the heroes of the Arthurian legends wreaked havoc among their enemies—cleaving skulls, severing limbs, and otherwise smashing their foes into red ruin. Every fan of heroic fiction is a little fascinated (and sometimes horrified) by blood and gore. You only have to go out to the movies to see that this is true.

However, the purpose of this chapter is not to overwhelm AD&D game players with sickening displays of pointless violence. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the AD&D game with a more realistic system for simulating telling blows and specific injuries. At its most basic level, the AD&D combat system is a contest of attrition that all boils down to who runs out of hit points first. Critical hits can change that.

This chapter presents two critical hit systems. The first is extremely simple: if you score a critical hit, you get to roll double damage. The second system is more involved and takes into account the location of the injury, the severity of the wound, and the power of the attacker. Last (but certainly not least!) this chapter concludes with a few notes on the effects of specific injuries and how they can be healed.

Does this belong in my campaign?

While the rest of this book assumes that you'll be playing with the full critical hit tables and rules, you'll find that this chapter can be completely disregarded with no ill effects. More than anything else in this book, critical hits are optional; if the DM and players don't want them, the AD&D game works fine without them.

However, one thing is worth mentioning: if monsters have to suffer critical hits, so do player characters. Otherwise, game balance quickly goes out the window.

System I

Critical hits occur when a character rolls a natural 18 or higher and hits the target by a margin of 5 or more after all adjustments. If the character scores a critical hit, he inflicts double damage dice, calculated before adjustments for Strength, magic, or special circumstances.

For example, Liera is a 4th-level elven warrior fighting a gnoll. Liera's base THACO is a 17, but she has a 17 Strength (+1 to hit), she's an elf using a long sword (+1 to hit), and she has a magical *long* ***sword*** +2. Her total adjusted THACO is 13, and the gnoll's Armor Class is 5. She will hit the gnoll on a roll of 8 or better, and can achieve a critical hit with a natural 18 or higher. On one combat round, she rolls a 19, which is a critical hit. She rolls 1d8 for damage and gets a 6, doubles that, then adds +1 for her Strength and +2 for her magical long sword, for a total of 15 **((6X2=12)+1+2).**

After dispatching the gnoll, Liera finds herself facing a horrible tanar'ri with an AC of -3! She scores a hit on a roll of 16 or better. She cannot score a critical hit because it's impossible for her to hit with 5 points to spare; even if she rolls a 20, she only hits by 4. If the tanar'ri charged, its AC would drop by one point to -2, and then Liera could score a critical hit with that roll of 20.

There are no specific injuries using this critical hit system. Instead, it only provides characters and monsters the chance to dish out extra damage when they make a great attack roll. Limiting the critical hits to attacks that hit by a margin of 5 or more solves one other problem. Consider the lst-level fighter. He only hits on a 20 against an opponent with very good armor class (0 or lower). Under other critical hit systems, the few times he does hit, the fighter automatically inflicts a critical hit. Under this system, that can't happen.

System II

The second, and more detailed, system for critical hits uses the same attack mechanic as the previous one. As above, the attacker must roll a natural 18 or higher and hit his opponent by a margin of 5 or more. However, the effects are determined by four factors: the attacker's weapon size compared to the defender's size, the type of weapon compared to the type of target, the location of the hit, and a roll for the injury's severity.

Critical hit charts

There are three types of weapons: slashing, piercing, and bludgeoning. Every weapon in the AD&D game is assigned a type, with only a couple of exceptions such as lassoes and nets. If a weapon does not have a type, it cannot roll on a critical hit chart, although it can still inflict double damage on a critical attack roll.

The three weapon types are compared

to three target types, for a total of nine different critical hit charts. The target types are humanoids, animals, and monsters. In the following pages, you'll find a chart for Bludgeoning vs. Humanoids, Bludgeoning vs. Animals, Bludgeoning vs. Monsters, Slashing vs. Humanoids, and so on. In most cases the correct critical hit chart to use should be relatively obvious.

Humanoids include anything that is generally shaped like a human, ranging from pixies to giants. If it has two arms and two legs, it's probably humanoid.

Animals include anything that is a normal or giant-sized version of a normal animal. Mammals, reptiles, birds, and amphibians all fall into this category—but not insects or fish. It also includes monsters that are animal-like in form, such as blink dogs, winter wolves, moon dogs, hell hounds, nightmares, osquips, or fire toads.

Monsters include anything that doesn't fit into one of the previous two categories. Giant insects of any kind, fishlike monsters, composite creatures such as manticores or sea lions, dragons, and weird things like xorn or leucrottas would all be considered monsters. If in doubt over whether something is a monster or not, call it a monster; this is the default category for things that defy classification.

Location

The critical hit charts require two die rolls: one to determine the location of the hit, and the other to determine the severity. Note that these can be rolled simultaneously. The location die is usually a single d10, but there are some exceptions.

Called shots: If a character hits with a called shot and scores a critical hit, the location die is ignored. The location is automatically determined to be wherever the character had been aiming.

Low attacks: If the attacker is fighting a creature two sizes larger or a defender with a distinct height advantage, use a single d6 for location. Head and upper torso shots become extremely unusual in these cases.

High attacks: If the attacker is two sizes larger than the defender, or has a significant height advantage, roll 1d6 + 4. Giants fighting halflings don't strike low.

Severity

The second roll on the critical hit charts is for severity. The severity of a hit is determined by the relative size of the attacker's weapon and the defender.

Weapon vs. target size	Effect	Dice
Weapon is > target	Minor	1d6
Weapon is = target	Major	2d4
Weapon is > target	Severe	2d6
Weapon is two sizes larger	Mortal	2d8

The dice indicated is the type rolled for that severity. For example, if a human armed with a long sword (size M) is fighting a gnoll (size L), he rolls 1d6 for the critical hit's severity because the long sword's size is smaller than the gnolls size.

If the weapon is two sizes larger than the target, it is possible to reach the 13 + column on the chart. These hits inflict triple damage dice, even if the victim passes his saving throw to avoid the effects of the critical hit.

Resistance

Critical hits automatically inflict double damage dice, or triple damage dice if the weapon is two sizes larger than the target (see above). However, any effects beyond this can be avoided by a successful saving throw vs. death. For example, the critical roll may indicate an arm injury with minor bleeding, but if the victim makes his saving throw, no arm injury actually takes place. The character only suffers double damage from the hit. Obviously, this could be sufficient to mortally wound or kill a character anyway.

Some monsters are naturally resistant to the effects of certain critical injuries. Creatures such as golems, undead, or elementals don't bleed and therefore ignore any such effects. A monster like a hydra can lose a head without being instantly slain. However, these injuries can still be important because it might affect the way a monster moves or attacks. A skeleton that's had a leg knocked off can't move at its full rate, even if it is less troubled by the injury than a living person would be. Slimes and jellies have no parts that are more specialized or important than the rest of the body, and are therefore immune to the effects of most critical hits. Use common sense to handle these situations as they arise.

Specific injuries

The critical hit charts include a number of specific injuries that go beyond a simple loss of hit points. Wounds are divided into five degrees of severity: grazed, struck, injured, broken, and finally shattered, severed, or crushed.

Wounds should be recorded on the character sheet. Attack and movement penalties remain until the injury that created the penalty has healed. Wounds always are accompanied by some loss of hit points, but a specific injury isn't damage per se; consider it a temporary penalty that the character has to put up with until it is restored.

For example, Feodor the Bold is fighting an ogre armed with a club. The ogre scores a critical hit, rolling a 6 for location and a 7 for severity. Feodor's torso has been struck, a wound that reduces him to 1/2 his normal move and gives him a -2 penalty to any attack rolls he makes. (It also puts a healthy dent in his nice plate mail.) Feodor's penalties remain until he recovers from his "torso struck" specific injury.

Let's say that Feodor had 16 hit points, and the ogre's blow inflicted 12 points of damage. The missing 12 hit points can be recovered eventually, but Feodor's penalties remain until the "torso struck" specific injury heals.

Severe injuries temporarily can reduce a character's maximum allowable hit points. In other words, a fighter with a broken leg will not be allowed to enjoy his full allotment of hit points until his broken leg is healed. If the character has more hit points than he is currently allowed, he is reduced to the injured value when the current battle is over. This represents the increased vulnerability of badly wounded characters.

For example, if a fighter with 30 hit points receives 10 points of damage and an "arm destroyed" injury that reduces him to 50% of his normal hit points, he drops from 20 to 15 when the battle is concluded and remains at 15 until his ruined arm is somehow healed.

Grazed: Grazes are minor injuries that may prove troublesome if they bleed. A cure ***light wounds*** spell or other healing magic capable of restoring 4 hp will heal a graze. (The cure ***light wounds*** spell doesn't have to actually restore that many points; it just must be capable of doing so.) Grazes also heal naturally as if they were a loss of 1d6 hp. In other words, if a graze is the equivalent of a 3-hp wound, two days of rest heal it completely, since characters normally recover 2 hp per full day of rest. Note that the graze isn't tied to the character's actual loss of hit points in any way. If a grazed character receives healing magic, the graze is healed and he gets to recover hit points.

Struck: A body part that has been struck is often penalized in a small way for the effects of the wound. For example, a critical hit that reads, "weapon hand struck, -2 penalty to attacks," means that the character has a -2 attack penalty with his weapon hand until the wound is healed. Injuries of this type can be healed by a ***cure light wounds*** spell or other healing magic capable of restoring 5 hp of damage. Struck areas heal naturally as if they were a loss of 2d6 hp.

Injured: Wounds of this severity can trouble a character for weeks; they heal naturally as if they were a loss of 10d6 hp. A ***cure serious wounds*** spell or other healing magic capable of restoring 10 hit points can also repair the injury. Injuries almost always entail serious combat penalties for the wounded character.

Injured arms, legs, or tails reduce a character to 75% of his normal hit points. An injury to the abdomen, torso, or head reduces a character to 50% of his normal hit points. A 25-hp character with a chest injury can have no more than 13 hit points until his injury is healed (and could have a lot less than that if he continues to suffer damage!)

Broken: Broken bones run the gamut from minor fractures that don't hinder a character at all to life-threatening compound fractures. Generally, the previous two injury categories are considered to include minor breaks or cracks; this cate-

gory is reserved for severe fractures. Broken bones can be mended by a cure ***serious*** wounds spell that is devoted just to knitting the bone; unlike grazed, struck, or injured, the character regains no hit points from a spell used in this way. Broken bones heal naturally as if they were 20d6 lost hit points, so bed rest in the care of a proficient healer is a real good idea if the injured character is planning on resuming his adventuring career anytime soon.

Broken arms reduce a character to 75% of his normal hit points. Broken ribs or legs reduce a character to 50% of his normal hit points. Any other broken bones reduce a character to 25% of his normal hit points.

Crushed, Shattered, or Destroyed: Limbs that suffer this kind of catastrophic injury may never be usable again; hits to the torso, abdomen, or head of this magnitude are often lethal. If the victim survives, he will never recover naturally. A limb damaged this way will be useless for the rest of his life, and hits anywhere else will leave the victim incapacitated. The victim will be bedridden for at least one to eight months before he can even regain a semblance of mobility.

A ***cure critical*** wounds spell or other healing magic capable of restoring 20 hp of damage can repair the damage of this kind of injury. In addition, the bones of the affected area (if any) are assumed to be broken and may require another application of healing magic to repair.

Destroyed shoulders, hips, or limbs reduce the victim to 50% of his normal maximum hit points. Any other wounds of this magnitude reduce the victim to 25% of his normal total.

Severed: Obviously, a creature that has a limb severed can no longer engage in activities that require the use of that member. A human with a severed leg can't walk or run and is reduced to crawling until he gets a crutch. A character with a severed shield-arm can't use a shield anymore, and so on. The only way to undo this kind of damage is by means of a ***regeneration*** spell.

The shock of losing a limb will prevent a character from moving independently or attacking for 2d10 weeks. At the DM's discretion, a character who "only" loses a hand or a foot may actually be able to perform limited activities after being stunned ld6 rounds, but only by passing a System Shock roll. However, characters who sustain such massive injuries are best-off abandoning the field to their enemies.

The loss of a limb will reduce a character's maximum normal hit points by 25% for a partial loss, or 50% for a more catastrophic loss. If the character can compensate with a wooden leg or hook, the hit point loss may be reduced by one step.

Critical hit effects

There are several possible effects of injuries caused by critical hits: bleeding, attack penalties, movement penalties, knockdowns, dropped weapons or shields, and possible armor or shield damage. Some of these conditions are temporary-a dropped weapon can be picked up-while others remain until the injury that created the effect is healed.

Bleeding: A character with minor bleeding loses an additional 1d2 hp per full turn until the wound is bound or magically healed. In addition, there is a chance that minor bleeding will stop on its own. The character may roll a saving throw vs. death each time he suffers damage from minor bleeding; if he is successful, the bleeding stops.

Anybody can stop minor bleeding by applying a bandage or otherwise addressing the injury. This takes about 1d6 combat rounds, or a single one-minute round.

Major bleeding results in a loss of 1d2 hp per combat round until the wound is magically healed or bound. Left untreated, major bleeding can easily cause a character's death. In effect, the -10 hit-point rule represents major bleeding; the character loses 1 hp per round when reduced to negative hit points.

Major bleeding can be stopped by a ***cure light*** wounds spell (the victim recovers hit points, tool, the healing of 5 hp of damage by any other magical means, or by a successful use of the healing proficiency. If the wound is bound by an untrained character, make an Intelligence check for the would-be medic. If he fails, he is unable to help. If he makes the check, the bleeding is reduced to minor.

Severe bleeding causes the victim to lose 10-60% (1d6 X 10%) of his original hit-point total every combat round. For example, if a fighter normally has 43 hit points but receives a severe bleeding result, he loses 4 hp (10%) to 24 hp (60%) in each round of severe bleeding. Needless to say, this is extremely lethal.

A ***cure light wounds*** spell (or 5 hp of healing) will reduce severe bleeding to major bleeding; a ***cure serious wounds*** spell (or 10 hp of healing) reduces it to minor bleeding; and a ***cure critical wounds*** or ***heal*** spell stops it altogether. An untrained character has no chance to bind a torso, abdomen, or head wound with severe bleeding, but a successful use of the Healing proficiency with a -4 penalty reduces severe bleeding to major bleeding.

Attack penalties: Many critical hits hamper the victim's ability to fight, resulting in an attack penalty. This is noted as applying to all attacks or to attacks with the particular limb that was injured. Other critical hits may prevent the victim from making attacks at all. If a critical hit prevents a character from making attacks, it also prevents him from casting spells or exercising any other combat action except moving or using magical items.

Movement penalties: Hits to the legs and body may penalize a character's ability to move. Usually, this is expressed as "1/2 move:" "1/3 move," and so on. If the character's movement is limited, he may not charge, run, or sprint; he can move only by using the reduced rate. A character with no movement at all can still ride a mount with difficulty, or drag himself on the ground with an effective movement rate of 1.

Knockdowns: If a critical hit calls for a knockdown, the victim is still entitled to a saving throw to avoid falling down. See Knockdowns in Chapter One. *[sic]*

Armor and Shield damage: Some critical hits call for possible damage to a creature's armor or shield. If the victim of the hit has no armor at that location, the blow is usually assumed to have more severe effects than if the character was protected. The armor descriptions in Chapter Seven deal with the coverage of each type of armor. *[sic]*

If the creature struck does have a shield or armor to deflect the blow, it may be damaged if the chart calls for it. First of all, the victim gets his normal saving throw roll to avoid the effects of the critical hit; if the roll is successful, there is no special effect for the hit. If the roll fails, his armor or shield must roll an item saving throw vs. normal blow with the number of points of damage (before doubling) used as a negative modifier for the save. If the attacker's weapon is larger than the defender (for example, a Size L halberd striking a Size M human), the save is rolled against a crushing blow, instead.

For example, remember the ogre's critical hit on poor Feodor? That result also called for possible armor damage. The ogre's club is Size L, so the item saving throw is against a crushing, not a normal, blow. Feodor is in plate mail, which has a saving throw of 7 vs. crushing blow. The ogre did 6 points of damage before doubling for the critical hit, so Feodor's armor is safe on a roll of 13 or more on a d20.

A damaged shield is useless. If armor is damaged, only the location struck is useless, and it no longer contributes to the overall AC of the suit. Refer to the rules for Partial Armor in Chapter Seven. In the example above, Feodor was struck on the torso. If his armor failed its item saving throw, only his breastplate would be ruined. A plate mail breastplate contributes 3 points to his AC, so Feodor's AC worsens from AC 3 to AC 6. Damaged equipment can be repaired by a skilled armorer or by magical means.

Reading the charts

First, find the appropriate table for the weapon type (slashing, piercing, or bludgeoning) and the target type (humanoid, animal, or monster.) Then roll for hit location (d10) and severity (variable dice.) Refer to the entry indicated on the chart. Remember, critical hits inflict double (or triple) damage dice, but any other effects can be avoided by a successful saving throw vs. death.

The specific types of injuries are described in the section following the charts.

Bludgeoning vs. Humanoids

Hit Location Chart

d10 roll	Location
1-2	Right leg
3-4	Left leg
5	Abdomen
6-7	Torso
8	Right arm
9	Left arm
10	Head

Location: Legs (Right 1-2, Left 3-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim knocked down
5	Knee struck, knockdown, 1/2 move
6	Foot broken, 1/2 move
7	Armor damaged, leg injured if target has no armor to cover legs, 1/4 move
8	Hip broken, minor bleeding, no move
9	Armor damaged, leg broken if target has no armor to cover legs, no move
10	Knee shattered, no move, -2 penalty to attacks
11	Hip shattered, minor bleeding, no move or attack
12	leg shattered, no move or attack, major bleeding from compound fractures
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (5)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned ld6 rounds
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 1/2 move
6	Armor damaged, victim stunned ld6 rounds, triple damage if no armor
7	Abdomen injured, l/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Abdomen injured, minor internal bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty to attacks
9	Armor damage, abdomen injured, minor bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty to attacks
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, minor internal bleeding
11	Abdomen crushed, no move or attack, major internal bleeding
12	Abdomen crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (6-7)

Severity	Effect
I-3	No unusual effect
4	Knockdown, stunned ld4 rounds
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 1/2 move
6	Shield damage, torso struck, 1/2 move
7	Armor damage, torso struck, l/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, minor internal bleeding, no move or attack
9	Ribs broken, minor internal bleeding, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, major internal bleeding, no move or attack
11	Torso crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
12	Torso crushed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Arms (Left 8, Right 9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Hand struck, weapon/shield dropped
5	Arm struck, shield damage/weapon dropped
6	Hand broken, -2 penalty to attacks/shield dropped
7	Armor damage, arm broken if victim has no armor to cover limb
8	Shield damage, arm broken, stunned 1 round
9	Weapon dropped, arm broken, stunned ld4 rounds
10	Shoulder injured, no attacks, minor bleeding
11	Arm shattered, 1/2 move, no attacks, minor bleeding
12	Shoulder shattered, no move or attacks, major bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
I-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned ld6 rounds
5	Head struck, helm removed, victim stunned 1 round; -2 penalty to attack rolls if victim had no helm
6	Head struck, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Helm damaged, face injured, stunned ld6 rounds, 1/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
8	Skull broken, helm damaged, victim reduced to 0 hit points and unconscious ld4 hours
9	Face crushed, minor bleeding, no move or attack, Cha drops by 2 points permanently
10	Head injured, unconscious ld6 days, lose 1 point each of Int/Wis/Cha permanently
11	Skull crushed, reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding, Int, Wis, Cha all reduced by l/2 permanently
12	Skull crushed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Bludgeoning vs. Animals

Hit Location Chart

dl0 roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/wing
2	Left foreleg/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakes or fish, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/Wings (1-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim knocked prone
5	Knee struck, victim reduced to 2/3 move
6	Foot/wrist broken, 2/3 move
7	Leg injured, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Hip broken, minor bleeding, no movement, -2 penalty to attacks; wing hit forces crash landing
9	Leg broken, 2/3 move, minor bleeding; wing hit forces immediate landing
10	Knee shattered, 1/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
11	Hip/shoulder shattered, minor bleeding, no move or attack; wing hit forces crash landing
12	Leg/wing shattered, no move or attack, major bleeding from compound fractures
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
l-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck; if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, -2 penalty to tail attacks due to pain
7-8	Tail injured, normal animals must save vs. death or retreat in pain; lose any tail attacks
9-10	Tail broken, lose any tail attacks, l/ 2 move if animal uses tail for movement
11	Tail crushed, victim stunned 1-3 rounds, lose any tail attacks, no movement or attacks if animal uses tail for movement
12	Tail crushed, pain reduces creature to 1/2 move and -2 penalty on any attack, minor bleeding; no move or attack if animal uses tail for movement
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned ld6 rounds
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 1/2 move

6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1d6 rounds, reduced to 1/2 move
7	Abdomen injured, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Spine broken, no move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Abdomen injured, minor bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty to attack
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, minor internal bleeding
11	Spine crushed, no move or attack, major internal bleeding
12	Abdomen crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
13 +	As **12** above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Knockdown, stunned 1d4 rounds
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 1/2 move
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d6 rounds, l/2 move
7	Spine struck, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, minor internal bleeding, no move or attack
9	Ribs broken, minor internal bleeding, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken major internal bleeding, no move or attack
11	Spine crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
12	Torso crushed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned 1d6 rounds
5	Snout struck, animal must save vs. death or retreat in pain for 1d10 rounds
6	Head struck, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Jaw injured, stunned 1d6 rounds, **2/3** move, -4 penalty to all attacks
8	Skull broken, animal reduced to 0 hit points and unconscious 1d4 hours
9	Snout/face crushed, minor bleeding, 1/3 move, no bite attacks, -4 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, unconscious 2d4 hours, reduced to 1/2 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for 1d3 months
11	Skull crushed, reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding, Int, Wis, Cha all reduced by 1/2 permanently
12	Skull crushed, immediate death
13 +	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Bludgeoning vs. Monsters

Hit Location Chart

d10 roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/claw/wing
2	Left foreleg/claw/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakelike or fishlike monsters, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/Wings (1-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim knocked down
5	Knee struck, victim reduced to 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks with that appendage
6	Foot /wrist broken, 2/3 move, -4 penalty to attach with that appendage
7	Limb injured, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to all attacks
8	**Hip broken, minor bleeding, 1/3** move, no attacks with limb; wing hit forces crash landing
9	Limb broken, 2/3 move, bleeding; wing hit forces immediate landing
10	Knee shattered, 1/3 move, -2 penalty to all attacks
11	Hip/shoulder shattered, minor bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to all attacks; wing hit forces crash
12	leg/wing shattered, no move, -4 penalty to all attacks, major bleeding from compound fractures
13 +	**As** 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
1-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck; if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, -2 penalty to tail attacks due to pain
7-8	**Tail injured, lose any tail attacks**
9-10	Tail broken lose any tail attacks, if creature uses tail for movement reduced to 1/2 move
11	Tail crushed, victim stunned 1-3 rounds, lose any tail attacks, no movement if monster uses tail for movement and -4 penalty to all attacks
12	Tail crushed, pain reduces creature to 1/2 move and -2 penalty on any attack, minor bleeding; if animal uses tail for movement, no move or attack
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned 1d4 rounds
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move
6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1d6 rounds, reduced to 2/3 move
7	Abdomen injured, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Spine injured, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Abdomen injured, victim stunned 1d3 rounds, minor bleeding, 1/3 move and -2 penalty to attacks
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, minor internal bleeding
11	Spine crushed, no move or attack, major internal bleeding
12	Abdomen crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location; Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
1 - 3	No unusual effect
4	Knockdown, stunned 1d4 rounds'
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d6 rounds, **2/3** move
7	Spine struck, l/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, minor internal bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to all attacks
9	Ribs broken, minor internal bleeding, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, major internal bleeding. no move or attack
11	Spine crushed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe internal bleeding
12	Torso crushed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Victim stunned 1d4 rounds
5	Jaw struck, -2 penalty to any bite attacks
6	Head struck, stunned 1 round, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Jaw injured, stunned 1d4 rounds, 2/3 move, no bite attacks
8	Skull broken monster reduced to 1/4 normal hit points and unconscious 2d10 turns
9	Snout/face crushed, minor bleeding, 1/3 move, no bite attacks, -4 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, unconscious 1d10 turns, reduced to 1/2 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for 3d6 days
11	Skull crushed, reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding, Int, Wis, Cha all reduced by 1/2 permanently
12	Skull crushed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Piercing vs. Humanoid

Hit Location Chart

dl0 roll	Location
1-2	Right leg
3-4	Left leg
5	Abdomen
6-7	Torso
8	Right arm
9	Left arm
10	Head

Location: Legs (Right 1-2, Left 3-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg grazed, victim knocked down
5	Leg struck, minor bleeding
6	Leg injured, minor bleeding, 2/3 move
7	Armor damaged; leg injured if target has no leg armor, 1/2 move, major bleeding
8	Knee broken, minor bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to any attacks
9	Armor damaged, leg struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move; if target has no leg armor, leg broken, major bleeding, l/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
10	Hip broken, no move or attack, major bleeding
11	Leg broken, severe bleeding, no move or attack
12	leg destroyed, no move or attack, severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (5)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move with minor bleeding
6	Armor damage victim stunned 1d4 rounds, minor bleeding, 2/3 move if no armor
7	Abdomen injured, major bleeding, l/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Abdomen injured, severe bleeding, l/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Armor damage, abdomen injured, minor bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty to attacks; if no armor, victim at 0 hit points, major bleeding
10	Abdomen injured, l/3 move, no attack, severe bleeding
11	Abdomen injured, victim at 0 hp, severe bleeding
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, 2/3 move with minor bleeding
6	Shield damage, torso struck, 2/3 move and minor bleeding
7	Armor damage, torso struck, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks; if no armor torso injured, no move or attack, severe bleeding
8	Torso injured, major bleeding, 1/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Shield damage; torso struck, -2 penalty to attacks; if no shield, ribs broken, severe bleeding, no move or attack
10	Ribs broken, severe bleeding, no move or attack
11	Torso destroyed, victim reduced to hit points with severe bleeding
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Arms (Left 8, Right 9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Hand struck, weapon dropped, minor bleeding; no effect on shield arm
5	Arm struck, shield damage/weapon dropped, minor bleeding
6	Hand injured, -2 penalty to attack shield dropped
7	Armor damage, arm struck, minor bleeding; if no armor, arm injured, minor bleeding
8	Arm broken, victim stunned 1 round, minor bleeding, shield or weapon dropped
9	Armor damage, arm injured, -2 penalty to attacks or shield dropped; if no armor, arm broken, stunned 1d6 rounds, major bleeding
10	Shoulder injured, no attacks, major bleeding
11	Arm destroyed, major bleeding, 2/3 move
12	Arm destroyed, no move/attack, major bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, stunned 1d3 rounds, minor bleeding
5	Head struck, helm removed, victim stunned 1 round; -2 penalty to attack rolls, minor bleeding if victim had no helm
6	Eye injured, -4 penalty to all attacks; if helmed, victim is only stunned 1 round instead
7	Helm damaged, face injured, stunned 1d6 rounds, minor bleeding, 2/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
8	Skull broken, helm damaged, victim reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding
9	Throat injured, severe bleeding
10	Skull broken, victim reduced to 0 hp, major bleeding, Int, Wis, Cha reduced by l/2 permanently
11	Throat destroyed, victim killed
12	Head destroyed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Piercing vs. Animals

Hit Location Chart

d10 Roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/wing
2	Left Foreleg/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakes or fish, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/Wings (1-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg struck, minor bleeding
5	Knee struck, 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Leg injured, minor bleeding, 2/3 move
7	Foot/claw injured, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks with that limb
8	Hip injured, minor bleeding, 2/3 movement, -2 penalty to all attacks; wing hit forces crash landing
9	Leg/wing broken, 1/3 move, minor bleeding; wing hit forces crash landing
10	Knee broken, minor bleeding, l/3 move, -2 penalty to all attacks
11	Hip/shoulder destroyed, major bleeding, no move or attack; wing hit forces crash landing
12	Leg/wing destroyed, no move or attack, major bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
1-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to tail attacks
7-8	Tail injured, minor bleeding, normal animals must save vs. death or retreat; no tail attacks
9-10	Tail injured, minor bleeding lose tail attacks; if creature uses tail for movement, l/3 move
11	Tail destroyed, victim stunned 1-3 rounds, lose tail attacks, major bleeding, no movement or attacks if animal uses tail for movement
12	Tail destroyed, stunned 1d2 rounds, major bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty on attacks; if animal uses tail for movement, no move or attack
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned

	1 round and reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned ld4 rounds, reduced to 2/3 move minor bleeding
7	Abdomen injured, 2/3 move, major bleeding, -2 penalty to all attacks
8	Spine injured, l/3 move, minor bleeding, -4 penalty to all attack
9	Abdomen injured, major bleeding l/3 move and -2 penalty to all attacks
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, major bleeding
11	Spine broken, no move or attack, major bleeding, victim paralyzed
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d4 rounds, minor bleeding
7	Spine struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, stunned 1 round, major bleeding
9	Ribs broken, minor bleeding, l/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, major bleeding, no move or attack
11	Spine destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with major bleeding
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, stunned 1 round, minor bleeding
5	Snout struck, minor bleeding, animal must save vs. death or retreat for 1dl0 rounds
6	Eye injured, stunned 1d3 rounds, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Throat injured, major bleeding, 2/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
8	Skull broken, animal reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding
9	Snout/face destroyed, minor bleeding, l/3 move, no bite attacks, -4 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, reduced to 0 hp, major bleeding; l/3 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for 1d3 months
11	Throat destroyed, severe bleeding
12	Head severed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Piercing vs. Monsters

Hit Location Chart

d10 roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/claw/wing
2	Left foreleg/claw/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakelike or fishlike monsters, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/Wings (1- 4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg grazed, minor bleeding
5	Knee struck, 2/3 move
6	Leg struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move
7	Foot/claw injured, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks with that limb
8	Hip injured, minor bleeding, l/3 movement; wing hit forces crash landing
9	Leg/wing broken, l/3 move, minor bleeding; wing hit forces crash landing
10	Knee destroyed, major bleeding, l/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks with affected limb
11	Hip/shoulder destroyed, major bleeding, no move, -4 penalty to attacks; wing hit forces crash landing
12	Leg/wing destroyed, no move or attack, major bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
1-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to tail attacks
7-8	Tail injured, minor bleeding, monster suffers -2 penalty to all attacks due to pain; no tail attacks
9-10	Tail broken, minor bleeding, no tail attacks; if creature uses tail for movement, l/3 move
11	Tail destroyed, victim stunned round, lose tail attacks, major bleeding; l/3 movement, -4 penalty to attacks if monster uses tail for movement
12	Tail destroyed, stunned 1d3 rounds, major bleeding, 1/2 move and - 2 penalty on any attack; if monster uses tail for movement, no move/attack
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round, minor bleeding
6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1d3 rounds, minor bleeding
7	Abdomen injured, 2/3 move, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to a attacks
8	Spine injured, l/2 move, minor bleeding, -4 penalty to all attacks
9	Abdomen injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move and -2 penalty to attacks
10	Abdomen injured, l/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks, major bleeding
11	Spine injured, no move or attack major bleeding, victim stunned 1d6 rounds
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with major bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, victim stunned round, minor bleeding
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d3 round minor bleeding
7	Spine struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, minor bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Ribs injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, major bleeding 1/3 move, no attack
11	Spine broken, major bleeding, no move or attack
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, minor bleeding
5	Snout struck, minor bleeding, monster must save vs. death or retreat for 1 round
6	Eye injured, stunned 1 round, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Throat injured, major bleeding, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Skull injured, monster reduced to 2/3 move, major bleeding, - 2 penalty to all attacks
9	Snout/face injured, major bleeding, l/3 move, no bite attacks, -2 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, reduced to 0 hp, major bleeding l/3 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for 1d3 weeks
11	Throat destroyed, severe bleeding
12	Head destroyed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Slashing vs. Humanoids

Hit Location Chart

d10 roll	Location
1-2	Right leg
3-4	Left leg
5	Abdomen
6-7	Torso
8	Eight arm
9	Left arm
10	Head

Location: Legs (Right 1-2, Left 3-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg struck, minor bleeding
5	Leg struck, minor bleeding 1/2 move
6	Leg injured, major bleeding, 1/2 move
7	Armor damaged; leg injured if target has no leg armor 1/2 move, major bleeding
8	Knee shattered, major bleeding, no move, -4 penalty to any attacks
9	Armor damaged, leg struck, minor bleeding, 1/2 move; if target has no leg armor, leg severed at knee, severe bleeding, no move or attack
10	Hip shattered, no move or attack, severe bleeding
11	Leg severed, severe bleeding, no move or attack
12	leg severed at thigh, no move or attack, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (5)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 1/2 move with minor bleeding
6	Armor damaged; victim stunned 1d6 rounds, major bleeding, 1/2 move if no armor
7	Abdomen injured, major bleeding, l/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Abdomen injured, severe bleeding, 1/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Armor damage, abdomen injured, minor bleeding 1/2 move and -2 penalty to attacks; if no armor, victim at 0 hit points, major bleeding
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, severe bleeding
11	Abdomen injured, victim at 0 hp, severe bleeding
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round, reduced to l/2 move with minor bleeding
6	Shield damage, torso struck, l/2 move and minor bleeding
7	Armor damage, torso struck, 1/2 move, -2 penalty to attacks; if no armor, torso injured, no move or attack, severe bleeding
8	Torso injured, major bleeding, 1/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Shield damage; torso struck, - 2 penalty to attacks; if no shield, torso injured, severe bleeding, no move or attack
10	Torso injured, severe bleeding, no move or attack
11	Torso destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location; Arms (Left 8, Right 9)

Severity	Effect
l-3	No unusual effect
4	Hand struck, weapon dropped, minor bleeding; no effect on shield arm
5	Arm struck, shield damage/ weapon dropped, minor bleeding
6	Hand injured, - 2 penalty to attacks/shield dropped
7	Armor damage, arm struck, minor bleeding; if no armor, arm injured major bleeding
8	Hand severed, stunned 1 round, major bleeding, shield or weapon dropped
9	Armor damage, arm broken; if no armor, arm severed, stunned 1d6 rounds, major bleeding
10	Shoulder injured, no attacks, major bleeding
11	Arm severed, severe bleeding, 1/2 move
12	Arm severed, no move or attacks severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, stunned ld3 rounds, minor bleeding
5	Head struck, helm removed, victim stunned 1 round; -2 penalty to attack rolls, minor bleeding if victim had no helm
6	Head struck, minor bleeding, victim blinded for 2d4 rounds by blood in eyes
7	Helm damaged, face injured, stunned 1d6 rounds, minor bleeding, 1/2 move, -4 penalty to attacks
8	Skull broken, helm damaged, victim reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding
9	Throat injured, severe bleeding
10	Skull destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hp, severe bleeding, Int, Wis, Cha all reduced by l/2 permanently
11	Throat destroyed, victim killed
12	Head severed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Slashing vs. Animals

Hit Location chart

d10 roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/wing
2	Left foreleg/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakes or fish, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/Wings (1-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg struck, minor bleeding
5	Knee struck, 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Leg injured, major bleeding, 2/3 move
7	Foot/claw injured, 2/3 move, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks with that limb
8	Hip injured, major bleeding, 1/3 movement, -2 penalty to attacks; wing hit forces crash landing
9	Leg/wing severed at midpoint, l/3 move, major bleeding; wing hit forces uncontrolled fall
10	Knee destroyed, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -2 penalty to all attacks
11	Hip/shoulder destroyed, severe bleeding, no move or attack wing hit forces crash landing
12	Leg/wing severed at mid-thigh, no move or attack, severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
1-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to tail attacks
7-8	Tail injured, minor bleeding, normal animals must save vs. death or retreat; no tail attacks
9-10	Tail severed near end, major bleeding, lose tail attacks, move reduced by 1/3 if creature uses tail for movement
11	Tail severed, victim stunned 1-3 rounds, lose tail attacks, major bleeding, no movement or attacks if animal uses tail for movement
12	Tail severed, stunned 1-3 rounds, major bleeding, 1/2 move and -2 penalty on any attack if animal uses tail for movement, no move or attack
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding

5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned ld6 rounds, reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
7	Abdomen injured, l/3 move, minor bleeding, - 2 penalty to all attacks
8	Spine injured, no move, minor bleeding, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Abdomen injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move and -2 penalty to attacks
10	Abdomen injured, no move or attack, major bleeding
11	Spine destroyed, no move or attack, major bleeding, victim paralyzed
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
l-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round and reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d6 rounds, minor bleeding
7	Spine struck, major bleeding, 2/3 move, - 2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, severe bleeding, no move or attack
9	Ribs broken, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, severe bleeding, no move or attack
11	Spine destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, stunned 1 round, minor bleeding
5	Snout struck, minor bleeding, animal must save vs. death or retreat for ldl0 rounds
6	Head struck, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Throat injured, major bleeding, 2/3 move, -4 penalty to all attacks
8	Skull broken, animal reduced to 0 hit points, major bleeding
9	Snout/face destroyed, major bleeding, 1/3 move, no bite attacks, -4 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, reduced to 0 hp, severe bleeding; l/3 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for ld3 months
11	Throat destroyed, severe bleeding
12	Head severed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Slashing vs. Monsters

Hit Location Chart

d10 roll	Location
1	Right foreleg/claw/wing
2	Left forleg/claw/wing
3	Right hind leg
4	Left hind leg
5	Tail (for snakelike or fishlike monsters, 1-5 is tail hit)
6-7	Abdomen
8-9	Torso/chest
10	Head

Location: Legs/wings (1-4)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Leg grazed, minor bleeding
5	Knee struck, 2/3 move, minor bleeding
6	Leg struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move
7	Foot/claw injured, 2/3 move, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks with that limb
8	Hip injured, major bleeding 1/3 movement; wing hit forces crash landing
9	L.eg/wing severed at midpoint, 1/ 3 move, major bleeding; wing hit forces uncontrolled fall
10	Knee destroyed, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks with affected limb
11	Hip/shoulder destroyed, major bleeding, no move, -4 penalty to attacks; wing hit forces crash landing
12	Leg/wing severed at mid-thigh, no move or attack, severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Tail (5)

Severity	Effect
1-5	No unusual effect
6	Tip of tail struck if prehensile, any items carried are dropped, minor bleeding -2 penalty to tail attacks
7-8	Tail injured, minor bleeding, monster suffers -2 penalty to all attacks due to pain; no tail attacks
9-10	Tail severed, major bleeding, no tail attacks; if creature uses tail for movement, 1/3 move
11	Tail severed, victim stunned 1 round, lose tail attacks, major bleeding; 1/3 movement, -4 penalty to attacks if monster uses tail for movement
12	Tail severed, stunned 1 round, major bleeding, l/2 move and -2 penalty on any attack; if animal uses tall for movement, no move or attack
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Abdomen (6-7)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Abdomen grazed, minor bleeding
5	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1 round, minor bleeding
6	Abdomen struck, victim stunned 1d3 rounds, reduced to 2/3 move, minor bleeding
7	Abdomen injured, l/2 move, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to all attacks
8	Spine injured, l/3 move, minor bleeding, -4 penalty to all attacks
9	Abdomen injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move and -2 penalty to attacks
10	Abdomen injured, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks, major bleeding
11	Spine injured, no move or attack, major bleeding, victim stunned 1d6 rounds
12	Abdomen destroyed, victim reduced to 0 hit points with severe bleeding
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

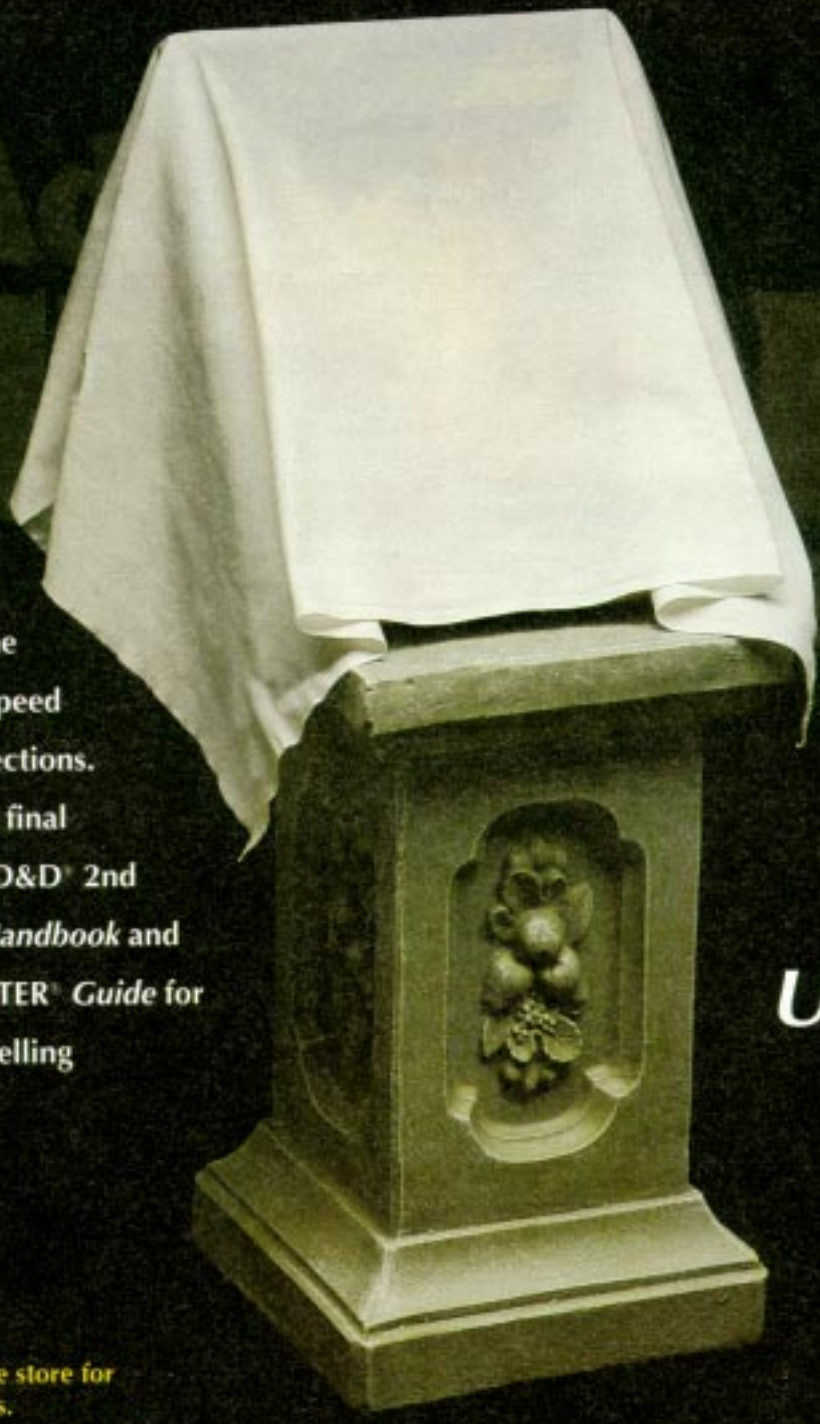
Location: Torso (8-9)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Torso grazed, minor bleeding
5	Torso struck, victim stunned 1 round, minor bleeding
6	Torso struck, stunned 1d3 rounds, minor bleeding
7	Spine struck, minor bleeding, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to attacks
8	Torso injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
9	Ribs injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move, -4 penalty to attacks
10	Ribs broken, severe bleeding, 1/3 move, no attack
11	Spine broken, major bleeding, no move or attack
12	Torso destroyed, victim killed
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Location: Head (10)

Severity	Effect
1-3	No unusual effect
4	Head grazed, minor bleeding
5	Snout struck, minor bleeding, monster must save vs. death or retreat for 1 round
6	Head struck, minor bleeding, -2 penalty to attacks
7	Throat injured, major bleeding, 2/3 move, -2 penalty to all attacks
8	Skull injured, monster reduced to 2/3 move, major bleeding, -2 penalty to all attacks
9	Snout/face injured, major bleeding, 1/3 move, no bite attacks, -2 penalty to all other attacks
10	Head injured, reduced to 0 hp, major bleeding; l/3 move and -4 penalty to all attacks for ld3 weeks
11	Throat destroyed, severe bleeding
12	Head severed, immediate death
13+	As 12 above with tripled damage dice

Masterpieces



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by David "Zeb" Cook

This time, instead of engaging in one of our cheerful round robins of review with three manly (read crotchety) game designers providing insights (sniping) on the industry and each other's opinions, you've just got me. I confess, my conscience has dogged me since I let my erstwhile companions do almost all the work the first time out (back in issue #212). Therefore, I'm sparing them the burden of labor this time.

So while Ken Rolston spends the month exploring the depths of video bios, IRQs, and DMA channels in his quest to discover why his new PC is the only one on the planet that locks up after five minutes of Doom (I'm sure we'll hear more about that later!) and Paul Murphy rests his mighty and acerbic wit, I thought I'd review two games that cover that perennial favorite activity of computer games—killing things.

If you haven't noticed, most game machines have styles and themes they do particularly well. Arcade machines excel at driving fast, flying fast, and killing things. Video games are strong on the running, jumping, and killing things kind of games. Computers are good at puzzles, simulators, and killing things. Notice a pattern?

Doom II (id Software)

Doom II

id Software
IBM PC (3.5" disk or CD-ROM)

Back when people made paper war games (oh, they still do?) there was a simple rule about what sold: NATO, nukes, and Nazis. Stick one, two, or even all three for a real stretch, into a game and supposedly it was a sure sell. It was a simplistic rule proven by the highly accurate reason that it sounded right.

Computer games need simplistic rules, too—and the best is: guns, gore, and a 3-D scrolling engine.

You see, I've been playing ***Doom II*** way too much.

Okay, let's assume that you have lived under a rock for the last year or that you are one of the intellectual elite who is too busy reading and would never be caught anywhere near a computer monitor or a TV set. Of course, you never read game magazines, popular magazines, or most newspapers, all of which by now have written up and analyzed the ***Doom*** phenom. And of course, you never talk to your friends who have computers because you've noticed that they've all become zombified, twitching maniacs who debate the merits of chain saws versus chain guns.

If you've lived the life of a troglodyte, you need an explanation of what ***Doom*** is all about. It's really quite simple. In ***Doom,*** you are a heroic soldier who wanders through mazelike corridors of a Martian base, opens doors to sealed rooms, and shoots things. Everything. If it moves, you punch, chain saw, pump lead, empty both barrels, blast, and fry it. Of course, the things you're trying to kill are bad and tough and they are also trying to rend,

shoot, and roast you, so it's all fair.

It's just not enough that you get to kill everything in sight. You also get to see the bullets hit and witness the bloody remains of your efforts-the very bloody remains. And you get to see all this first person in a 3-D world where you turn and move in any direction until you run into a wall, wade through a river of radioactive acid, or drop into a pit of lava. With music and sound effects to enhance it all, you wind up with gun-toting paranoia, which can be experienced by every human on the planet with a fast enough PC.

That's it. That's Doom.

And it's pretty much Doom II.

With ***Doom*** being the monster mega-hit that it is, the folks at id Software have come out with the marketer's answer to everything: If it worked once, do it again. Which is exactly what id did. Doom II isn't really a new game, it's more like new levels for the same game. Everything you loved or maybe hated about ***Doom*** is here-zombie soldiers, big pink demons, fireballing imps, gruesome deaths, the BFG-9000, and, of course, the chain saw. There's some new stuff added in the form of bigger bad guys like the Arch-Vile and the highly useful super shotgun, but the basic formula remains the same: If it moves, shoot it. True, the game is dressed up with a little bit of a story line-you're now going to Earth, where you must slaughter the possessed old tenants and the new occupants that have recently moved in from hell-but story line is not what this game was ever about. The story is just an excuse to kill things.

The network option is still there, so you can ruin job productivity for up to four people at once, either by going head-to-head or by cooperating as a team. There's the ability to play by modem, although that can be frustratingly slow. Use your modem instead to get playing tips and secret codes from a BBS.

Doom *II* is available as a CD-ROM, though it's obvious this is more a convenience to the publisher than any special benefit to you. Stick the disc in your CD-ROM drive, and the first thing it does is download the entire game onto your hard drive. After that, you can take the CD and hang it on your wall. Turn it shiny side out and pretend it's that platinum-record single you wrote in your spare time. The point here is, you're not getting anything special out of the CD-ROM disc, the publisher is. The disc is cheaper for them to press, which means they make more money when you buy the CD-ROM. True, there's the bonus "First episode from the original ***Doom!"*** but even this is marketing, trying to lure you into spending more money. Which, of course, companies want you to do.

So, is ***Doom*** II any good? Given the fact that it does everything ***Doom*** did, doesn't mess with success, and throws a few widgets into the mix, it's just what lots of ***Doom*** addicts want. The reasoning is clear: If you liked the first one, you'll love the second.

Doom II (id Software)

Well, sort of. There's nothing wrong with ***Doom*** II. It does a wonderful job of being a replay of what everybody loved—but that's the problem. It is a sequel without surprises. Part of the thrill that made ***Doom*** such fun was the amazing newness of it. The 3-D, the sound, the traps, and especially the violence were thrilling and surprising. If you play *Doom II* as a sequel, you've seen it all before. The challenges are difficult and engaging, but they just don't have the same "I don't believe what I'm seeing" impact. Without something startlingly new, it's just more of the same. In a sense, the folks at id played it too safe.

There's also a caveat every buyer should know. ***Doom*** II requires speed-not absolutely, but the peacock looks like a turkey if your machine is too slow. The box says it can be played on a 386/33 DX, which is like saying you can sit around and watch molasses pour if you like that sort of thing. Even slower 486's may leave you wishing for more. On the other hand, blitzing through the halls using a Pentium 90 is about as fast as any player could manage.

This doesn't mean ***Doom*** II isn't fun, and if mindless but intense carnage is what you want, you'll get your money's worth. It's just not a must-have, keep-on-the-hard-drive-forever game. If you need to have more ***Doom,*** get this. If not, maybe you want to wait for the next big advance.

X-Com

Microprose
IBM PC (CD-ROM)

Imagine Earth is visited by aliens. Think of all the wonders and benefits we could gain through an exchange of ideas and technology. Wouldn't that be great?

Imagine Earth is visited by aliens with guns. Think of all the wonders and benefits we could gain by killing them and taking their toys before they kill us. Wouldn't that be . . . ?

Uh-huh.

Apparently that legendary first contact with intergalactic life didn't go so well. It was probably the result of a simple misunderstanding-the aliens dissected Joe Boy's best hunting dog, so he took after them with a shotgun, to which they retaliated by melting him down to his shoes with one itsy-bitsy little plasma beam, and before you know it the whole dang world's up in arms. Whatever the cause, you can rest assured knowing just who's the bad guy-aliens are here to destroy life on Earth.

Well, you may scoff, but that's precisely the premise of ***X-Com*** from Microprose. In it you are the leader of X-Com, an international high-tech anti-alien Delta Force. It's your job to defend the Earth from these intergalactic attackers, and the nations of the world have pooled their resources to help you do it. You take their cash to build an underground base, customizing it from a list of parts-hangars, workshops, radar arrays, missile batteries, storerooms, barracks, and the like. As you get more cash and the invaders get more aggressive (and they will), you can build new bases throughout the globe, siting them wherever you want. In the future the world will be a model of international cooperation-Russian-based fighters will dogfight UFOs over Beijing without a glimmer of protest. It's one of those hidden benefits of alien invasion.

Of course, a bunch of underground bases isn't enough. You've got to buy fighters, transports, rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, ammunition, even tanks. Then, you've got to recruit soldiers to use those weapons, scientists to invent you new

X-Com (Microprose)

ones, and engineers to build them. And then you've got to assign them to their teams and tasks, tell them what to invent, and what to build. And then you've got to assign weapons out of stores to the different transports and fighters so you don't actually send out your teams unarmed—not to mention packing the excess off to other bases and scrapping derelict equipment, all the while watching your budget. You do this once, you do this twice, you do this for every base you have in the game which can be quite a few.

Oh, and did I mention planning? You've got to plan ahead, because nothing happens immediately. At this stage ***X-Com*** is played in "real" time, which means you can make the computer days and hours go as fast or slow as you want until something exciting happens. Computer days pass between choosing what you want and having it actually show up. If you need replacement troopers to fill out a squad, you better have thought of that in advance.

If you think this doesn't sound like a lot of fun, you're right. The gameplay is hindered by the need to click through layers of screens (everything in ***X-Com*** is done with a mouse) and to repeat the same tasks over and over again for different bases. At this stage of the game useful information is lacking, like what you've already bought (but not received) and how long it will take to get it. Furthermore, there are several frustrating features—such as buying a tank but not being allowed to use it because you forgot to buy ammo or, worse still, being told you can't use it because you don't have enough ammo but not being told how much more you need. Think 50 rounds of tank shells is enough? Maybe, maybe not. Little help is given in placing new bases, such as your current coverage and operating ranges. The only advice is to check the graphs of UFO activity against those nations that give you money. Fail to take care of the UFOs attacking them, and they lower their contributions.

Fortunately, *X-Com* is not all a game of quartermaster, supply, and the other parts work much better. *X-Com* is a game of Earth defense, so things heat up when the aliens arrive. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, you will fight them in the air; you will fight them on the beaches.

Air combat is simple. While time passes (at the rate you choose) you wait for UFOs to appear on a globe of the world you can spin, tilt, and zoom in on. When your radars pick up incoming UFOs, you have to decide what fighters to scramble and what their attack modes should be. Do you just want to observe and track, make a cautious stab, or hit them quick and hard? The answer's obvious—that good offense equals good defense thing. Get in there and take them out before they can land and cause havoc. Blow 'em up in the sky or force 'em to crash but don't let 'em gain a beachhead.

Whether they land safely or crash, you're going to have to send a team in, and the tactical combat is the heart of the game. *X-Com's* real goal is to have you take command of a squad of soldiers who go in to deal with those bloodthirsty aliens. The real action begins when your Skyranger transport lands and it's time to disembark your assault squad. The *X-Com* team obviously has played a tactical war game or two, because their system shows they know their stuff. Instead of trying to reinvent the gaming wheel, they have taken concepts and techniques from paper war games and have adapted them wisely to the computer. The result is a game that emphasizes planning and strategy, not arcade-honed reflexes.

The first thing they did is get rid of "real" time. Ground combat is played in clearly set out turns. Each turn you issue orders to your soldiers from a simple menu. You can move them across the map, change their facing, ready weapons, throw grenades, shoot at targets they can see, or have them hold fire until something comes into view. Every action costs movement points from the soldier's total, and soldiers have different totals and costs, reflecting their strengths and weaknesses. Once you've given all the commands you want, you end the turn and let the computer have its fun. The aliens now move and shoot back at you, although your overwatch force may have a chance to get its licks in.

This alone would make for a fine game, but ***X-Com*** uses the computer's strength to build on that by adding hidden movement. A soldier can shoot only what he can see, and ***X-Com*** shows just what he can see in a simple, clear way. The battle map isn't a top-down view like in a paper war game. Instead, the computer shows the player an orthographic view, like you're on a nearby hill looking down on the action. Buildings, walls, and trees are shown in perspective, so it's easy to see just what is blocking your line of sight, especially since the

computer only shows you things that at least one of your squad can see.

Your range of sight isn't endless, either. The computer will show you the scenery and enemy movement only out to a limited distance. Missions can happen during day or night (remember that "real time" business?), and at night your soldiers are going to feel like lonely pools of light in the darkness. You'll quickly learn the value of lobbing a few flares into the darkness.

Finally, the designers paid attention to the details that make tactical combat games fun. Your soldiers can go in buildings and up stairs, fire out windows, blow openings in walls, kneel behind cover, go berserk, and just plain panic. The aliens come in a variety of types and are armed with appropriate alien hardware, all better than what you start with. In fact, one of your objectives is to get and research these weapons so you can turn them on your intergalactic foes.

X-Com is a fine game for those who want a lot more thought in their carnage, something beyond the run-into-the-room-and-shoot-everything-in-sight school of strategy. For this it's the best you'll find out there right now. Would that an RPG had such a well-honed combat model. It is unfortunate that the game is burdened with the save-the-earth's-resources and budget-management plot lines instead of expanding the range of tactical scenarios you face. The game wants you to be sergeant, general, and quartermaster, all rolled into one. Tactician, definitely; strategist, maybe; but logistics is what staffs were created for. I'd rather lose a game through bad tactics than because I couldn't balance the books.

X-Com (Microprose)

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The Partha Chronicle
● A Ral Partha Special Report
March 1, 1995 ●

Ral Partha Freezes Prices

By Ral
Editor of Partha Chronicle

Happy New Year! A little late, I know, but it is 1995 and, thankfully, 1994 is long gone for all eternity. Thank goodness! The miniatures industry was on shakey ground for too long. That Card game, "you know the one", took the country by storm, forcing all the Game Companies to reassess their priorities.

Well anyway, we ended the year on a good note. We have a lot of exciting projects on the board this year. I can not tell what yet. It's a surprise.

What I can tell you is very good news! We will NOT increase our prices this year. Yeah!

We knew you would be thrilled. The truth is we realize how big a price increase you had to swallow when we went to Lead Free metal and we can appreciate how hard it was to take. When you buy toys they are supposed to be fun. Taking out a second mortgage on your house to buy a Battletech miniature is definitely not fun.

In lieu of all of that, we want to thank you for your continued support. Those of you who patronized Ral Partha over the years and have come to expect a raise in prices this time of year, can rest easy.

As a second note, the 1995 Ral Partha Catalog is now available. Talk to your local Game/Hobby store or give us a call.

ERRATA

It has been brought to our attention that in our last missive (appearing in issue #212 of DRAGON® Magazine) we neglected to mention one of our Canadian Distributors for Retail Stores. (The Great Partha evidently was 'Seer'-ing something else at the time.) We would like to correct this gross oversight on our part at this time and call your attention to:

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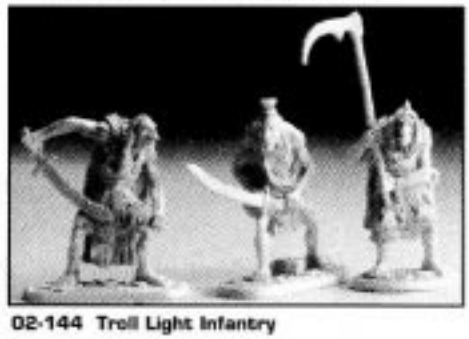
Rampaging Trolls

Check them out! They are really nasty. Cool looking too.

02-140 Troll Leader and Shamen



02-144 Troll Light Infantry

By Partha, the Great Seer
Great Seer of The Partha Chronicle

A Drumbeat in the distance...The smell of rendering fat and swamp in the air...I see...a wart. No. Wait. I see a bunch of warts...And puss, I definately see puss. The mists of Space and Time are clearing. Ahhh! It is the return of the Trolls, I sense! Gone from the ken of man for 'lo these past hundred years, the Troll-kind have returned to wreak their vengeance on the lands of men.

A dark day is at hand and any that would remain free (and indeed, retain their entrails!) must set aside current jealousies and strife to join forces against the coming tide of war.

Partha
The Great Seer

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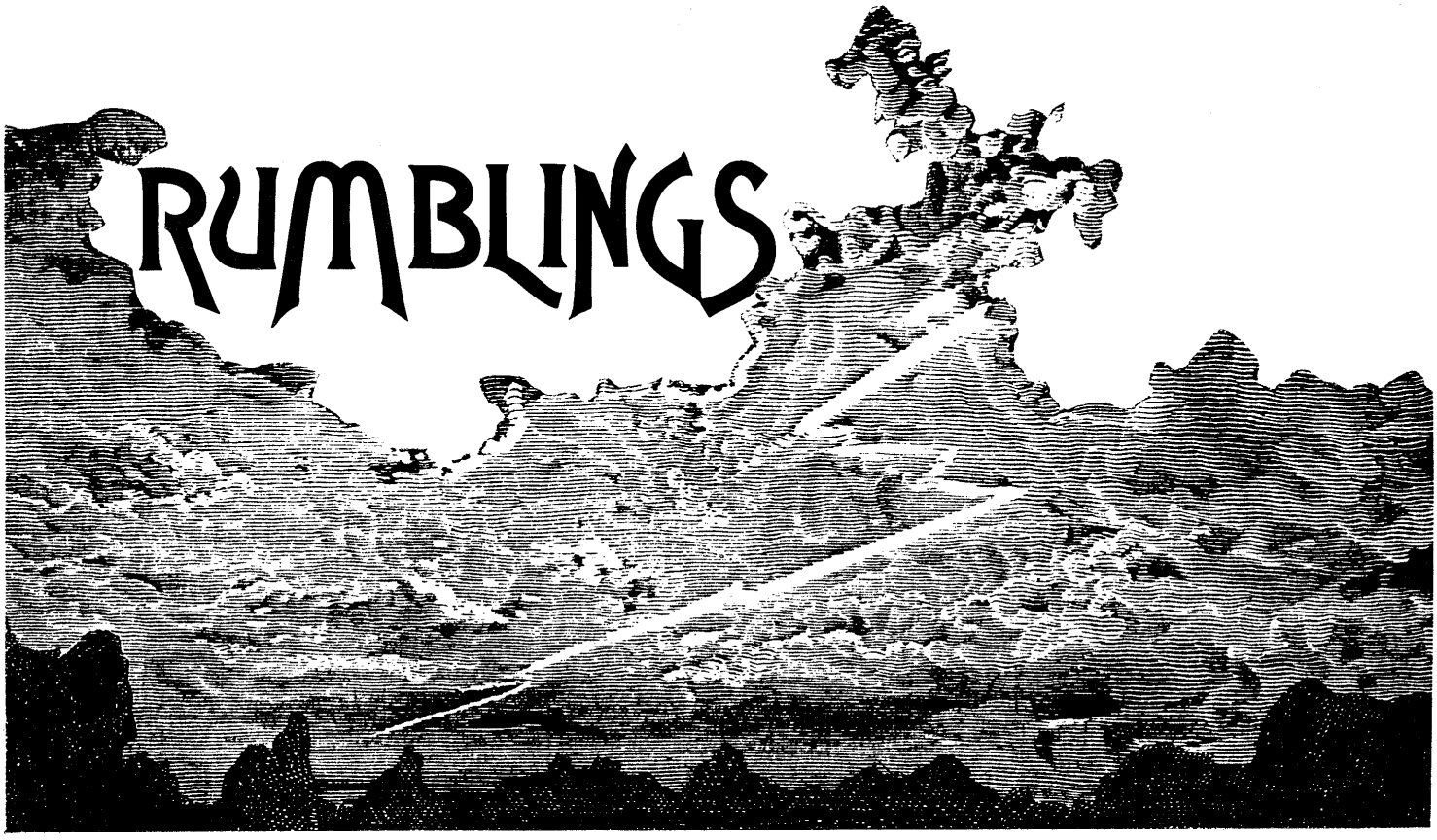


News of people & events in the gaming industry

What you don't know *can* hurt you . . .

You can send us news, press releases, and announcements using the Internet at TSR.mags@genie.geis.com. We welcome your comments at *Rumblings*, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI, 53147, U.S.A.

Lead Story:
BLOOD WARS™ game kills 'em

A report from the recently held Toy Fair convention states that TSR Inc.'s new collectible BLOOD WARS card game is a bloody-good hit. Designed by TSR staffer Steven Schend, the game's first print run reportedly sold out at the Toy Fair, where the cards were officially debuted. The game is being reprinted and should be available by the time you read this. (How many other games have sold out before they even got to store shelves?)

Game resurrected

Hogshead Publishing, in conjunction with Games Workshop Ltd., will reprint the WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY* game sometime this spring, with four supplements to follow within the year. Using the slogan "Chaos Never Sleeps," Hogshead will publish new material as well as the best of the old stuff.

In addition to the WARHAMMER game, also be on the lookout for the BUGTOWN* role-playing game from Hogshead. The BUGTOWN RPG is based on the comics of Matt Howarth.

Ahoy, mate

Former West End Games' staffer Ed (Ted) Stark has left the publishing seas in Pennsylvania to join the swashbuckling crew of TSR's game department. Welcome aboard, Ted!

Bloodsucking books

White Wolf and Wizards of the Coast will be releasing a series of novels based on the JYHAD* card game. The first novel will be written by James A. Moore and Kevin Andrew Murphy. The new Sonja Blue book, Paint it Black, by Nancy Collins also will be out soon.

Talsorian tomes

In more book news, R. Talsorian Games has announced new deals for novel lines for both the CYBERPUNK* game (with Time/Warner) and the CASTLE FALKENSTEIN* game (with Prima Press). Rumors have it that at least one of the novels will be penned by Talsorian game guru Mike Pondsmith.

Retraction retracted

It seems our "correction" in the Rum***blings*** column of issue #214, which stated that Dirt Merchant Games and White Wolf

were not going to produce a second edition of Dirt Merchant's HOL* game was incorrect. The two companies will be producing said game after all. This all obviously was just a masterful scheme by the Wolfers and the Merchants to get not one, but three mentions of that product in this column. The new version of HOL will be published by Black Dog Games, the Wolfers imprint for mature-audience games.

Goodies galore

Below is a smorgasbord of news and product announcements regarding some of our fave games or game folks in the industry—listed in no particular order, of course:

Thunder Castle Games, producers of the TOWERS IN TIME* collectible card game, has acquired the HIGHLANDER* game license. Expect to see a HIGHLANDER card game (as mentioned in issue #214) and an RPG, maybe by this year's GEN CON® Game Fair. (Speaking of the Game Fair, Thunder Castle may be bringing the HIGHLANDER TV show's star, Adrian Paul, to the convention.)

West End Games has sold the rights to produce first-edition TORG* game products to Omni Gaming Products. West End plans to bring the Possibility Wars to an end, possibly producing a "post-war" second edition product as part of its MASTERBOOK* line.

The first supplement for Pariah Press' way-cool WHISPERING VAULT* horror RPG is out. The DANGEROUS PREY* book is a 112-page "mixed-bag" collection of GM advice, additional powers for Shadows and the Unbidden, 32 new Shadows for your PC stalkers to encounter, plot hooks, and a full adventure. Pariah plans much support for the game, including a GM screen package (with a full adventure) that should be available by the time you read this, and a Stalker's Guide later this year. Also, look for Pariah's new RPG at this year's GEN CON Game Fair.

Look in your stores now for the new GURPS* CTHULHUPUNK* book, co-produced by Steve Jackson Games and Chaosium. Take the dystopian future of the cyberpunk genre and add the Lovecraftian grue of the Cthulhu mythos and what do you get? One heck of a fun-sounding game!

Also available now is a noncollectible card game from WotC. It's called THE GREAT DALMUTI* game, and it's based on a playing-card game known by numerous names. (We played this game in college where it was known as "Jerk".) Regardless of its origin, the game's a blast.

Speaking of card games, WotC and White Wolf are publishing the RAGE* game, based on the WEREWOLF* RPG. The game debuts in May.

More magazine mayhem

Calamities and confusion continue to abound in TSR's Periodicals Department. An on-the-job computer accident has led Kim Mohan, Editor-in-Chief at DRAGON Magazine into believing he is a skunk. Doctors have so far been unable to reverse the effects. In other animal news, Wolf Baur has gone rabid and recently has been caged at the local Timberwolf Society, due to his unusual spurts of hair growth and frothing at the mouth. Friends may visit him there. After watching one too many episodes of the ***X-Files,*** Michelle Vuckovich apparently has been abducted by aliens, although no one outside the department seems to have noticed. Art director Larry Smith has left the magazine department to pursue a career as an Elvis impersonator—Best of luck, Larry! Dale Donovan seemingly snapped under the pressure of his imminent transfer; it seems that he now wishes to be known as Debbie Donovan. Renee Ciske, the only remaining sane member of the staff has fled to TSR's graphics department and could not be reached for comment. The rest of the staff has been sacked—for obvious reasons.

Ω

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, inc.

The Auld Alliance

Insights Into a long-lasting gaming group

by Arthur Collins

As the adventure gaming hobby has matured, so have its adherents. Adolescents have all the time in the world to pursue their (admittedly absorbing) hobby, but as they age they find themselves pressed for time. Fellow gamers move away to college or get married. Somehow, the old gang finds it harder and harder to get together. Eventually, it quits meeting altogether. How sad. And how typical.

There seems to be an interest these days in what makes a playing group stick together. What makes one group last? How can one prolong "the good old days"? In response, I only have my own experiences to offer. I was part of a playing group that stayed together for 11 years.

Many players came and went in those 11 years, but the core of our group always remained: Kevin; Jessi; Phred; Deanne; myself. Three of us just happened to be clergy or ministerial students; now, four of us are. (My wife is the only one of us who has any sense.) I had recently graduated from seminary when our group of friends got together for a day of playing games in that fall of 1978. We had brought various strategy games, and played a couple. Then it was Kevin's turn to pick the game we would play. He started us off on

a new game, whose rules weren't even complete: something called the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. We were hooked.

We didn't intend to make the group last as long as it did, nor was it apparent then that we five would be the ones to keep it going. There is a large element of luck in all this. But beyond luck, there are things that make groups survive—and there are things that make groups die. Trying to keep together a group that's ready to die can be a frustrating experience, but more of us have experienced the greater frustration of seeing a group die that had a lot of life left in it.

During our time as a playing group, we had children, moved (frequently), saw Jessi go off to college, and saw me start a PhD and Phred three different Master's programs. What finally broke us up was Kevin & Jessi's move to North Carolina for three years so Jessi could attend seminary there. That was just too far for us to link up—but we made it 11 years, Since that time, I've done a lot of thinking about what made our experiences together so much fun—and so durable. Here are 12 pieces of advice derived from that reflection.

Game with friends

Our friendship had been established before we started playing the AD&D game together. This was a great help. We truly enjoyed each other's company, and saw each other outside of the gaming environment (and still do). Thus, our gaming simply was one more thing we enjoyed doing together.

This is not meant to devalue the friendships that grow up out of a common interest in role-playing games. We all meet new friends by way of the interests we have in common. But I have turned down more invitations to play from people whose only interest I share is the game. Some of them can talk of nothing else. There is a technical word for such people: they are ***boring.***

A relationship that is worth investing years of your life in has to be built on more than just an interest in the game. It can start there, but it cannot stay there without reaching a dead end. And we have all met people who need to be told (in a kindly, but firm fashion) that they really ought to get a life; you cannot get all the human contact you need from rolling dice and recounting your alter-ego's exploits ***ad nauseam.***

Be responsible

Personal maturity is a must for a long-lasting group of any kind. A good rule of thumb for a group to last and be what the members desire it to be is that 75% of the members must be present 75% of the time. This requires the discipline of being able to make commitments and keep them. People who are always forgetting their appointments, constantly rescheduling them, or perennially late doom the group of which they are a part.

This is not such a big deal in your teenage years, when you seem to have an infinite amount of time to "hang out" with your peers. The way America does schooling largely accounts for this: at no other time in your life are you thrust together—socially—with so many other people in similar life situations. And you will never again have this much time to goof around with your friends until you retire.

The new pressures of college, work, and marriage (i.e., the "Adult World"), require us to learn how to organize and manage our time differently. We all must come to terms with the tyranny of the calendar and the clock. Blessed are those whose "I'll be there," means precisely that, for they shall never lack for friends.

In our group, while many players came and went, we five stayed committed to each other, and our mutual responsibility kept our fun alive. Once we had agreed upon a playing date, it went on our calendars and became as important as any other work or family date listed. Only rarely did something so important come up that we had to reschedule or cancel.

Being responsible also includes not neglecting work, chores, or schoolwork in order to play. These conditions tend to lead to personal crises that will have an adverse effect upon any neglectful members of your group—and thus, your group as a whole.

Include significant others

Not everyone who loves you loves your hobbies. A major source of conflict in new marriages, for instance, is old friendships or activities that the new partner does not share in—especially if they cost money. New sweethearts/spouses always have to make their peace with what competes for their partner's time. Nor is this restricted to RPGs. Golf, poker, even church, all can wind up being resented by the partner who opts out of (or is excluded from) them.

We were fortunate that all our partners were in sympathy with our hobby. (One could've taken or left the game, but she soldiered on for years and does not regret it. It was fun—but it could very easily not have been.) Invite these newcomers. Show them a good time. And if they don't want to participate, remind the partner who does that she needs to work out ways of compensating for time spent with these friends doing this activity.

A new gamer is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. But a jealous partner is a threat to the life of your group. Don't make people jealous. Get them on your side by any means you can.

Be courteous

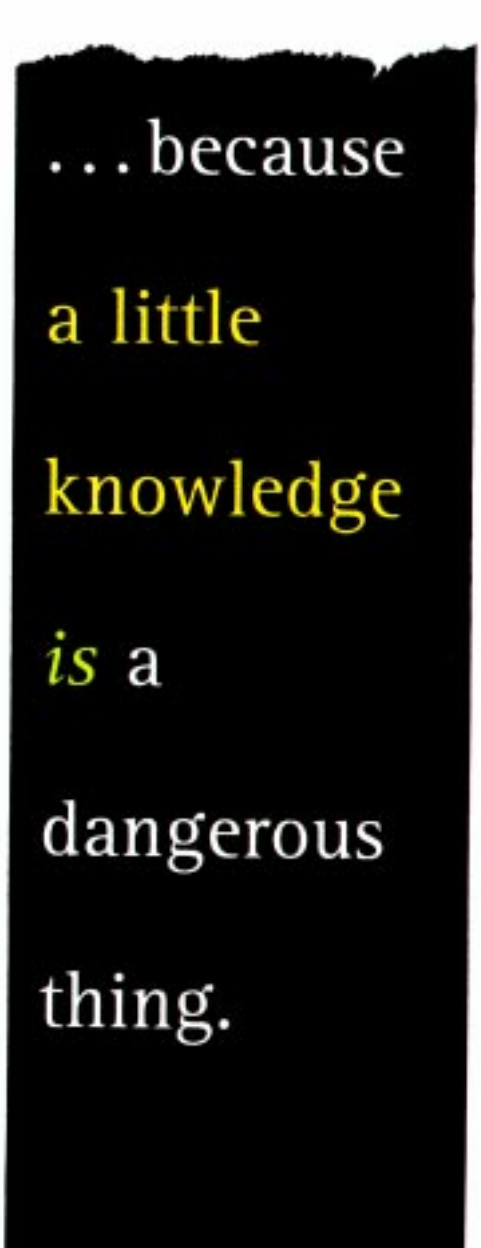
RPGs take a tremendous toil on a house and refrigerator. Papers, cushions, and pizza crusts often are strewn everywhere by the end of a playing session. It is fundamental to a long-lasting relationship of any sort that one does not impose on the same people in the same way all the time.

That doesn't mean you have to move your playing site around (although we often did). It does mean that you need to help clean up. It also means that the host shouldn't be responsible for feeding everybody every time. Bring food—real food, not just munchies. Chip in your share of money when it's time to order out. Don't mooch.

When younger gamers play with older gamers (an arrangement we welcomed, I might add), the older gamers might not expect the younger ones to provide a full share of provender. On the other hand, that means the younger ones need to be extra-helpful when it comes time to do the dishes or vacuum the carpet. Remember, we're talking about how to create a long-lasting playing group; don't wear out your welcome!

Play regularly

Keeping a campaign going requires regular gaming time. Without it, interest



cannot be sustained; no one knows where their characters are or what is going on. Regular play is more important than intense play in this regard.

We fell into the habit of meeting more or less monthly (anywhere from three to six weeks apart). Meeting weekly would have put too great a strain on our frantically busy lives, while meeting less regularly would have made the campaign's continuity suffer.

Distance was not the factor one might think for us. We all were adults with cars. We kept the group going when a two-hour drive was involved for at least one member of the group. Most of the time, however, we were all employed within an hour's drive or so of the meeting place.

Budget time

When you're only playing 10 or 12 times a year, you just can't mess around. The time has to count for something. At first, we tried staying overnight at each other's homes. We would arrive the night before and game until all hours, then get up and go at it until early afternoon. We soon got tired of this, though.

Eventually, we developed a different pattern. We would gather on the appointed day by noon and begin with lunch. Last session's treasure would be shared out, and preparations for this day's session would be made. By the time lunch was cleared away, we were ready to roll those dice. We would play steadily to (and sometimes including) supper. By early evening, we were wrapping up. Sometimes this required us to "freeze time" in the middle of an adventure.

Thus, we usually spent four or five good solid hours gaming, and we found this sufficient for our purposes. We appointed someone in our group to be in charge of divvying up treasure, and he would come to each session with various lots of treasure ready to be shared out. We would then roll dice and choose. Haggling with each other was a waste of time, so we forbore haggling. The experience points due from treasure (if not known beforehand) also were announced by the treasure accountant. Likewise, someone was always the official experience drudge: at the end of the session, the DM would go through the monsters killed (and treasure, time permitting) and give out numbers, which would be crunched by the experience drudge, who would announce each person's share. The DM did not give out extra XP to individual players. We figured we were all good players and singling out individuals was pointless; besides, it took time we didn't want to spend on it.

Share leadership

Not only did we share the bookkeeping chores concerning experience and treasure, we shared refereeing and design. Over the 11 years, we played in several different campaigns, including one that ran for four or five years (real time). Each campaign had a different DM.

But we also shared leadership among the players even in the middle of a campaign. We not only planned out the details of our characters, we often planned out their home towns (with the DM's blessing). We also pitched in with rules. I was the resident psionics expert, so I often helped conduct psionic combat, even when I wasn't the DM; another player was the only guy who could understand the weaponless combat rules, so we left them to him. This takes trust, but trust comes out of the kind of relationships upon which long-term groups depend.

As we chose our characters for each campaign, we tended to complement, rather than compete with each other's choices. That way, each of us had strengths to offer the party that others didn't, and no one could hog the glory.

Make the game your own

We started playing the AD&D game long before the current welter of printed campaign settings and modules. The core rule books weren't even all in print yet. This was tremendously liberating to our imaginations. Along the way, we played various "canned" adventures (and some were very good), but there is a certain sameness to the published modules available. When you come right down to it, there's nothing like building your world and adventures from scratch.

I am convinced that depending too much on published adventure material results in superficial engagement with the fantasy world. One tends to race through adventure after adventure, acquiring a "been there, done that" kind of attitude. What's the next thrill?

There is nothing to match the texture and depth of a world that a competent DM has lovingly created. It is something you can enter into without getting tired of. This may be only to say that the more you put into your game, the more you will get out of it. That's a cliche; but it is also profoundly true.

Our worlds and campaigns were not made only by us (and thus engaged our deepest levels of creativity), they were made for us; each DM took the players who would be investigating this campaign world into account in the very creation of it. We "fit" into our fantasy worlds in a way no one can really "fit" into RAVENLOFT® or DARK SUN® campaign (which is not to say that those aren't good and helpful products). That's something that makes one want to come back for more.

Remember why you're there

When we discovered the AD&D game in 1978, we were all adults. We all were well-read in the literature of fantasy and science fiction, and we had more than a smattering of philosophy, history, religion, science, and whatnot to call upon in our play. We were delighted with the game because it allowed us to enter the kinds of worlds we had previously only read about. This is the joy that J.R.R. Tolkien named "sub-creation."

It troubles me to see what seems to be a major shift among the young gamers of today in how they use the FRPG format. We always had seen the rules and game constructs (e.g., the cleric character class) as mere conveniences; what we did with them was to enter the world of heroic fantasy. But gamers today who have been introduced to the world of fantasy through FRPGs see it differently; for them, the rules and game constructs are often the primary reality.

We enjoyed using the AD&D game to play at being vikings or Arthurian knights or the dwarves out of ***The Lord of the Rings.*** And if the rules didn't describe those possibilities exactly, we adjusted. We made it up. But I see kids today who wonder what sort of AD&D game wizard Merlin is: not would be, but is. These kids read the rule books before they read the stories that inspired the games. That means their palates have been trained in some strange ways.

In a module outline I once submitted to TSR, Inc., I attempted to take the party into the Garden of Hesperides out of Greek mythology. To be successful, a player would have to sense that she had really stood in that wonderful place, and reached out his hand to grasp the Golden Apples of the West. Quite an undertaking—but how if it were to succeed? Would this not be a worthy adventure?

Since I had no AD&D game stats for the kind of beings the triple moon goddess' avatars would be, I adapted. In one of her phases, she would appear more or less as a hag, I guessed. So I had a hag in the module, as a means of representing this legendary encounter in game terms. The editor's cryptic comment in the margin was, "Did hags," meaning that a recent module had featured this creature.

We are reduced to that. No longer do we find many gamers for whom the rules and game constructs provide a magical key to enter the worlds they have longed for all their lives. I meet far more who know only the games themselves. The result is that they either become bores, or they burn out on gaming quickly. They run through all the neat stuff published, and it's just not enough. They eat and eat, but are still hungry. They cannot see the legendary being the monster stats represent, but only more and more stats.

This is important if you want to build a long-term campaign or playing group. You must find ways to reach into the wealth of fantastic lore and find the primary core of that literature. That well is not likely to run dry, whereas the savor of the published material or your pocket money assuredly will.

Be a team

One of the things I am proudest of in our playing experience was our track record of cooperation. We faced danger bravely for each other. We shared treasure unselfishly. We were not greedy. And we never, ever played characters who stole from each other or tried to fight each other.

Most adolescents pass through a negative stage on their way to positive self-image. This is expected, and we all make allowances for each other. But I have no patience at all for the immature gamer who derives pleasure from "role-playing" an anti-social, disruptive character. This is merely attention-getting behavior, using the game to boost the real person's presence among real people under color of the game character who stands in for him.

This is not to say we didn't occasionally play characters with divergent interests, and even some shady alignments. But implicit in the social contract that brings the characters together must be something that makes them work together as a team. This may not be so important in one-shot sessions or tournaments, but it is absolutely vital in building a group that is going for the long haul. Egotistic or pain-in-the-butt characters are not fun for the other players to deal with, and the group will wind up either expelling their owner or dissolving.

Do long-range design

A group that seeks the long-lasting game experience should plan for long-lasting campaigns. That means that you have to work out what the new party is trying to accomplish (even if the PCs don't know yet).

A campaign is not just a string of adventures. It must be bound together by a common theme, a long-range goal. Various short-range goals and personal character goals will provide diversity within the campaign, but there must be something the whole thing is about.

Likewise, characters should be provided with long-term goals beyond merely climbing to maximum level. Without these personal character goals, running a character becomes boring. After you've played everything, and run several characters up to the top, what's left to excite you—character development, that's what.

When the campaign matures, it's time to conclude it and start something else. When the character matures, it's time to retire him. Trying to keep getting the same bang out of a played-out quest or demigod-ranked characters is boring. A long-lasting playing group requires a change every now and then.

Take a break

Once in a while, the group needs to do something different with its time. Especially between campaigns, the same old thing can be particularly dull and lifeless. We tried miniatures battles, one-shot sessions with old characters, canned tournament modules, and even playing an entirely different game for the day. All of these activities give the members of the group the pleasure of being together and playing, without having to be accomplishing something. Eventually, someone comes up with a new campaign idea, and the members can get excited about designing new characters for it.

Conclusion

Not all of these suggestions may be appealing—or even possible—to all gamers and all groups, but they describe our group as we were. And our track record is none too bad, I'd say.

Would I do it again? We're all very busy now—more so than ever, and life is even more complicated. And yet, my answer is yes; I would like to belong to a group that derived the kind of fun from each other's company that our group once did. And who knows? Maybe it will come to pass. I hope that something like it will come to pass for you. And I can truthfully say, I wouldn't have missed it for all the worlds there are to adventure in.

Know
It
All!
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MAGAZINE

ROLE-PLAYING reviews

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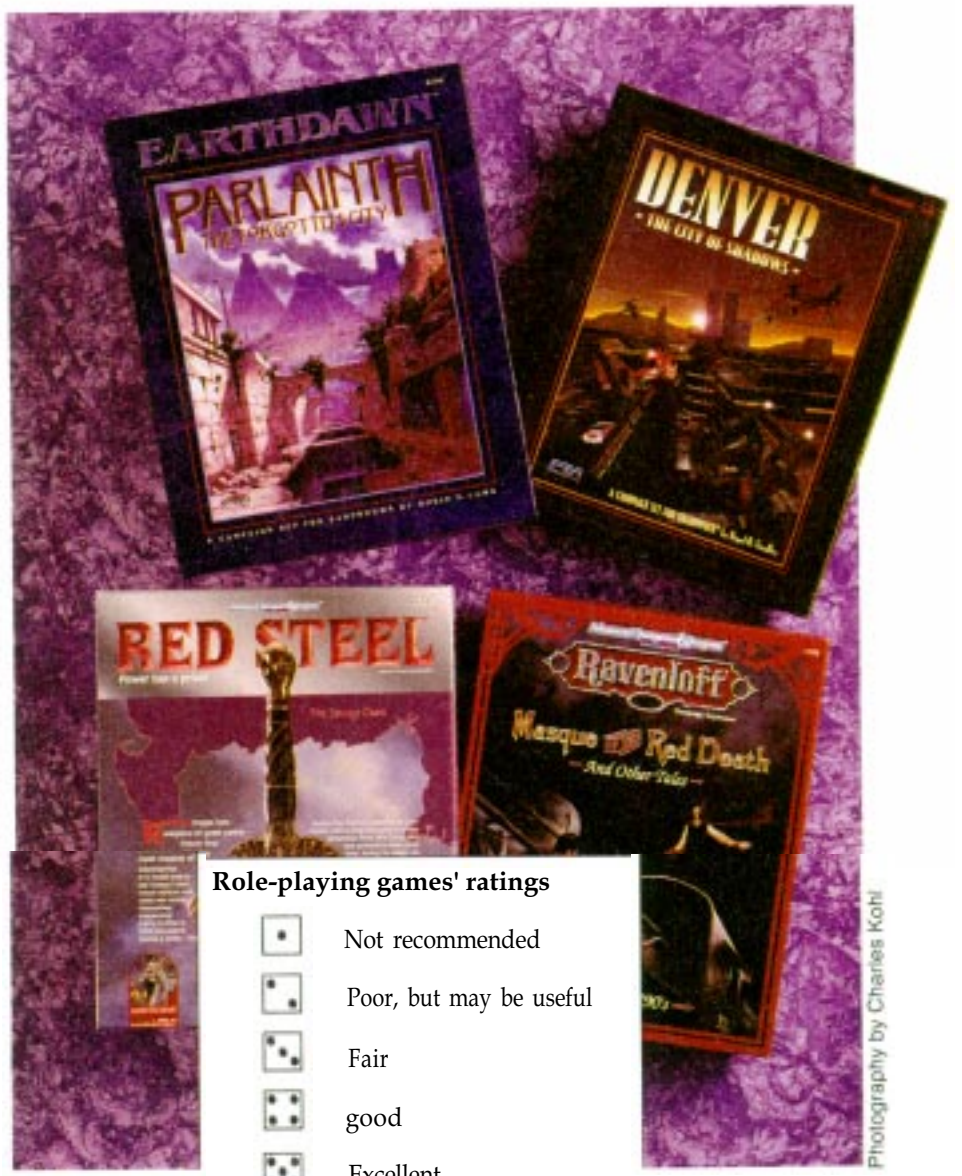
A world in a box; campaign expansion sets



Photography by Charles Kohl

Role-playing games' ratings

- Not recommended
- Poor, but may be useful
- Fair
- good
- Excellent
- The best

My thanks, as always, to everyone who's taken the time to write. Your comments—such as those from Herman Liebson, Jeremy Richard, April Wilson, Steffan DelPiano, and Joe Kushner—have given me enough ideas for a book full of columns. Heck, I don't even mind when you point out my errors, like when Evan Franke of Sacramento, Calif., who noticed that I attributed authorship of ***A Farewell*** to ***Arms*** to Thomas Wolfe instead of Ernest Hemingway (in DRAGON® Magazine issue #210). Be informed, however, that I will no longer include intentional mistakes for your amusement.

What else is in the mailbag? A lot of you want information about specific games, such as publisher addresses and adventure recommendations (which I'm happy to provide). Others want to share their opinions on products not covered in the column (which I always get a kick out of). Still others want feedback on their manuscripts-in-progress (which I rarely feel qualified to give). I've also noticed the same three questions turning up again and again, mentioned in maybe half of the last hundred letters. To save everyone else a stamp, let's answer them here:

How do I get my article published in DRAGON Magazine? For starters, don't send it to me. Send it to the editor. And if you haven't seen the writer's guidelines, it's a good idea get them first. (Forward a self-addressed envelope to the editor and ask for them.)

What's the best game for a novice? The best entry-level fantasy RPGs include the classic DUNGEON & DRAGONS® game (the one in the brown box, released last year), Iron Crown's LORD OF THE RINGS* game, and Flying Buffalo's TUNNELS & TROLLS* game. Beginners with a taste for the bizarre might sample R. Talsorian's CASTLE FALKENSTEIN* game (reviewed in issue #214) or Steve Jackson's TOON* game. (I'm surprised how often this question comes up; must be a lot of baffled beginners out there.)

How many games do you own? I've never counted, but a lot. Let me put it this way: they have a room in my house all to themselves. (I used to think I was the most popular guy in the neighborhood because of my sparkling personality.)

Anyway, on to the business at hand, which this month takes us into the realm of deluxe expansion sets. These lavish, goodie-packed boxes make hard-core players tremble in ecstacy at the thought of exploring the worlds inside. Some worlds, of course, are better than others.

Masque of the Red Death and other Tales

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game supplement for the RAVENLOFT® setting
One 128-page book, three 32-page books, one three-panel referee screen, one 21" X 32" map sheet, one 21" X 32" poster, boxed
TSR, Inc. $25
Design: William W. Connors with D.J. Heinrich, Colin McComb, and Shane Hensley
Editing: Anne Brown, Jonatha Ariadne Caspian, and Richard Pike-Brown
Illustrations: Stephen Fabian and Ned Dameron
Cover: Robh Ruppel

So the guys and gals at TSR, Inc., were sitting around at a staff meeting, wracking their brains for new product ideas, when a neon sign flickered to life over the head of William Connors, spelling out ***VICTORIAN ROLE-PLAYING GAME.*** Then he remembered the less than enthusiastic reception given to previous Victorian RPGs, like GDW's SPACE: 1889* game; the sign spit out a few sparks and blew up. When it was his turn to speak, Connors mumbled a few cryptic comments about, er, a RAVENLOFT® campaign expansion, maybe something with Jack the Ripper and foggy streets and hand gun rules, and he'd get back to them as soon as he combed the glass fragments out of his hair.

Okay, I made all that up. (April Fool!) But whatever its origin, ***Masque of the Red Death*** is cause for celebration, especially for players whose AD&D® game campaigns have gone stale. Not exactly the RAVENLOFT setting and not exactly a new game, Connors' little mutant is the most provocative AD&D variant since the SPELLJAMMER® campaign.

Red Death refers not to the Edgar Allen Poe story, but to a malevolent entity spawned in ancient Egypt during the "golden age of magic." As malevolent entities will do, it proceeded to wreak havoc for a few thousand years, promoting violence and catalyzing disasters. By the late 19th century, the era in which the game unfolds, the world totters on the edge of the abyss. Enter the player characters, poised to challenge the Red Death and its minions. "If [the PCs] fail, then the inhabitants of Gothic Earth may well be doomed to an age of darkness and war more terrible than any before." Connors paints the setting in gaudy colors, combining real-world history with legends and literature. Thus, necromancers practice dark arts among the slave traders of New Orleans, while Buenos Aires agricultural barons attempt to squelch rumors of monstrous winged serpents. Spirit creatures stalk the settlers of the American West. Sherlock Holmes shares a railroad car with Count Dracula. Unlike the basic RAVENLOFT setting, where mysterious mists divide the realm into distinct settings, the Gothic Earth setting has no divisions. Because men and monsters can travel wherever they like, the referee has access to the entire planet for supernatural slugfests.

Balancing blood-soaked imagery with humorous flourishes (a backfired spell might give the caster a forked tongue), ***Masque*** deftly combines the gloom of White Wolfs VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* game and the whimsy of R. Talsorian's CASTLE FALKENSTEIN* game. Though ***Masque*** would've benefited form a tighter focus—why not just concentrate on Europe instead of struggling to cover the whole world?—there's more to embrace than complain about.

Still, ***Masque's*** drawing card isn't the Victorian setting. As good as it is, we've been here before, not just in CASTLE FALKENSTEIN, but also in Chaosium's ***Cthulhu by Gaslight*** (an expansion for the CALL OF CTHULHU* game) and TSR's own ***For Faerie, Queen, and Country*** supplement for the AMAZING ENGINE® game. The main attraction is the game system.

Masque begins by jettisoning the traditional character classes, replacing them with soldiers (they're like fighters, but can't specialize in favored weapons), adepts (wizards with limited magic and no school specialization), mystics (priests with limited magic), and tradesmen (like thieves, but without Climb Walls, Pick Locks, and other thief abilities.) All player characters must be human. Additionally, they're encouraged to select character kits from a list of down-to-earth vocations such as Cavalryman, Journalist, and Laborer. Nonweapon proficiencies, optional in the standard AD&D game, are required here; among the choices are Chemistry, Photography, and Criminology.

Masque also introduces RAVENLOFT setting players to gunpowder. Simple, common sense rules ease the transition from crossbows to carbines. Armor, for instance, provides no protection against firearms used at short range, and only modest protection at medium and long ranges. Characters attempting to empty their guns may take advantage of a two-part combat round, making half their attacks in part one, the rest in part two. To reflect the increased damage from bullets, any damage die showing a 6 is rerolled. A hit from a derringer, for example, normally inflicts 2d6 points of damage. If the dice show a 5 and a 6, the 6 is rolled again. If the subsequent roll is 4, the hit inflicts a total of 15 points (5 + 6 + 4).

Reduced reliance on magic further nudges ***Masque*** in the direction of realism. Spells can't be used unless the caster makes a successful proficiency check. Magical items are rare, and in some cases, unavailable. Even acquiring a spell is risky; if a character attempting to learn a new spell fails a System Shock roll, he loses one point of Strength or Constitution.

The rule book ends with an informative chapter of referee tips, covering rule modifications from the RAVENLOFT boxed set. Three fully-developed adventures, each in its own 32-page booklet, answer most of the questions about staging campaigns. ***Red Tide*** serves up few surprises—anyone who can't anticipate the plot twists hasn't seen enough late shows—but plenty of action and a lot of fun. Red ***Jack,*** a Jack the Ripper take-off, put my entire party in the cemetery—consider that a recommen-

dation. Red Death uses Edgar Allen Poe as a springboard for a tricky mystery.

Graphically, the RAVENLOFT campaign remains the most conservative horror RPG on the market; compared to the in-your-face White Wolf line, the RAVENLOFT setting is about as visually compelling as the ***Cryptkeeper*** cartoon series. I realize that the RAVENLOFT campaign aims at a broader audience than, say, the VAMPIRE game, but TSR could stand to turn the temperature up a notch. The illustration on page 18 of the ***Masque*** rule book (where a gun blast ventilates a zombie's head) is a step in the right direction, at least as far as we lowbrows are concerned. Though the referee screen does a nice job of displaying the tables, the posters don't amount to much. One features a more or less standard map of the world, intended, I guess, for those who don't have access to an atlas. The other depicts the cover art and the RAVENLOFT logo, intended, I guess, for those inclined to help TSR promote their products.

Evaluation: The Victorian setting's fine, but it's a sidebar to the system overhaul. ***Masque of the Red Death*** makes a persuasive case for reality-based role-playing, where wits count more than muscle and a shotgun packs more punch than a ***fireball.*** Endearingly human, these are the only AD&D game characters I'd consider using as investigators in a CALL OF CTHULHU game or, for that matter, as adversaries in a VAMPIRE campaign. And nitpickers who've been clamoring for a streamlined, skill-based AD&D game ought to be dancing in the streets. ***Masque of the Red Death*** doesn't qualify as the Third Edition of the AD&D game, but it's a reasonable facsimile—call it Second Edition, Version 2.0. May Connors' next mutant be just as ornery.

Parlainth: The Forgotten City

EARTHDAWN* game supplement
One 152-page book, 24 pages of player handouts, one 22" X 32" map sheet, 18 treasure and creature cards, boxed
FASA Corporation $25
Design: Robin D. Laws
Additional design: Shane Lacy Hensley and John J. Terra
Editing: Donna Ippolito
Illustrations: Jim Nelson, Joel Biske, Steve Bryant, Elizabeth Danforth, Newton Ewell Earl Geier, Alex Heller, Jeff Laubenstein, Larry MacDougall, and Mike Nielsen
Cover: Les Edwards and Jim Nelson

Let's settle this now: the EARTHDAWN game has displaced the RUNEQUEST* game as the pre-eminent alternative to the AD&D game. Though other fantasy RPGs continue to thrive—Chaosium's superb PENDRAGON* game and Wizards of the Coast's ARS MAGICA* game spring to mind—only the EARTHDAWN game matches the AD&D rules in scope and invention. Whether the EARTHDAWN game matches the AD&D game's durability remains to be seen, but it's still early. (If you're keeping score, the RUNEQUEST game had about a twenty-year run.)

Initially, I was underwhelmed (see the review in DRAGON issue #202). Despite its ambitious reach, the EARTHDAWN rules seemed more interested in echoing the AD&D game rather than subverting it; the knickknacks (obsidimen, thread magic) felt gimmicky, the game systems more throwback than revolutionary (12-sided dice?). But lately, I've been warming up to it, mainly because of classy supplements like ***Barsaive*** and ***Mists of Betrayal. Parlainth,*** a look at a devastated Theran city and the most entertaining EARTHDAWN package so far, continues to up the ante.

As with the previous supplements, ***Parlainth*** receives a first-class presentation. The attractive guide book boasts tasteful graphics and vigorous writing, leavened with subtle humor. ("Vardegul is a hard t'skrang to get to know.") To help referees shape the world to the needs of their campaign, the personality and location descriptions come with a menu of options. For instance, should a referee choose to introduce shady businessman Torgak into an adventure, he can make him distrustful of Therans in general (Option 1), resentful of the dwarf kingdom Throal (Option 2), or cooperative with independent adventurers (Option 3). The Eastern Catacombs of the Laneways may hold the jewels of a rich merchant (Option 1), contain a gauntlet of traps to discourage trespassers (Option 2), or consist of useless passages built by cadaver men (Option 3). Eccentric organization, however, makes the book tough to use. The "Running Adventures in Parlainth" section inexplicably precedes the discussion of Parlainth itself. Halfway through the book, the page numbers stop (at 77), then start over (with page 2); if the designers felt a need to divide the text, why not just give us two books? Though the colorful monster cards are well-done, the poster map is a waste, indifferently rendered and information-free. On the other hand, the player handouts, a generous assortment of parchment-like documents, are an inspired bonus. Allegedly from the junk shop of Vardeghul (the hard-to-know t'skrang), the sketch maps and journal excerpts make terrific rewards, treasures, and clues.

The guide book opens with a history of the doomed city, explaining how Parlainth began as the provincial capital of Thera, then moved to an astral plane for protection against the Scourge. But alas, evil nosed its way in, corrupting the city almost beyond recognition. Now, Parlainth has returned to the land of Barsaive in a form recognizable to anyone who's spent more than a day or two with a fantasy RPG: ". . . shattered buildings, winding and rubble-strewn streets, and dark, dank catacombs . . . many of them filled with fiendish traps, wherein glittering treasures and dangerous creatures reside."

Once past the history, which is more interesting than I've made it sound, the rest of book details nine sections of ruins, including the War Zone, the Vaults, and four different catacombs. Each section opens with a background briefing, followed by architectural descriptions, notes on inhabitants and traps, and encounter suggestions. For example, pyramids and muck-filled pools dominate the Vaults, a former administrative center that's become a sanctuary for renegades. A party may search for murderous fugitives or seek an audience with the dragon Charcoalgrin. Snares and alarm bells line one of the corridors, another holds extravagant tapestries and hot-tempered ogres.

Old hat? It could've been. But designer Robin Laws has a knack for transforming the mundane into magic. Adventurers low on funds may place bets on the falsemen, humanoid servitors engaged in perpetual duels. A lucky explorer might stumble across a butterspider, an enchanted lump of lard (I'm not kidding) with magical healing abilities. Waxmen, animated wicker mannequins, lurk in the shadows, as do the Scurriers, repulsive scavengers whose brains protrude from cracks in their skulls. The absence of floor plans and detailed scenarios may frustrate beginners, but seasoned players, especially those nostalgic for the campaigns of their youth, should find a lot to like.

Evaluation: A dungeon crawl for grad schoolers, ***Parlainth*** freshens even the hoariest cliches with its muscular design and literate encounters. There's a mountain of material here; an industrious referee should be able to develop a year's worth of adventures without breaking a sweat. It suffers, however, from an inconsistent tone, not moody enough for horror, nor goofy enough for light fantasy. FASA has yet to convince me to undertake a full-scale EARTHDAWN campaign, but they're getting closer. For now, I plan to mine ***Parlainth*** for ideas and use them elsewhere—you could say that ***Parlainth*** is one of the best AD&D game products TSR never published.

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Most AD&D game supplements feature personalities and settings. Some feature treasures and monsters. ***Red Steel*** is the

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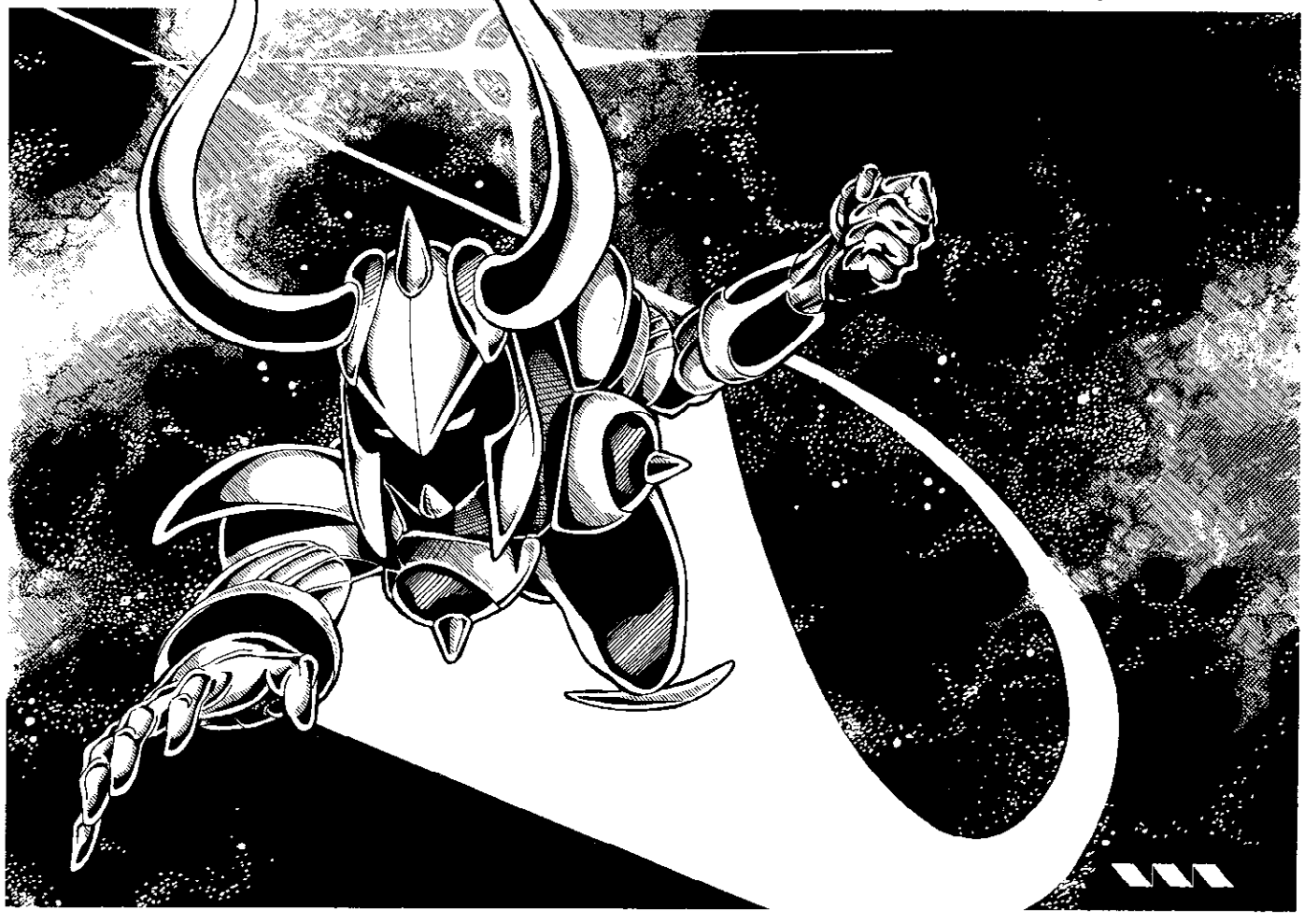

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first to feature dust and rocks, The dust, vermeil, grants extraordinary powers to anyone who brews it up and drinks it, but also may cause excruciating physical deformities. The rocks, ***cinnabryl,*** can be formed into jewelry that fends off the side effects of vermeil, and shaped into weapons capable of wounding magical creatures. Both substances permeate the war-ravaged lands of the Savage Coast (introduced in 1985's X9 module of the same name), spewing enchantments like Old Faithful spews steam. In effect, Red Steel is the flipside of ***Masque of the Bed Death;*** where ***Masque*** reduces the role of magic, Red Steel beefs it up, big time.

The box includes two attractive booklets, the fat one devoted the game systems, the skinny one to the Savage Coast. Designer Tim Beach, also responsible for the terrific ***Wizard's Challenge*** adventure, is nothing if not comprehensive, tackling everything from the weight of a machete (10 pounds) to the nickname of Queen Ator I ("Old Gray Fangs"). Rounding out the package are three handsome maps and a compact disc, which I could've lived without. It's not that it's badly produced—in fact, it's better engineered than the last Green Day album—I just can't figure out what do with it. Most of the disc contains mood music, some reminiscent of a film soundtrack, the rest sounding like it belongs in a medieval dentist's office. Elsewhere, a poor man's Bela Lugosi narrates a track of introductory material. For those wanting to enhance their game sessions with something other than the radio, the CD fills the bill. For everybody else . . . well, I wouldn't buy Red Steel just for the music.

The preponderance of nonhuman races makes the Savage Coast more treacherous than the typical AD&D game setting. Originally colonized by outcasts and criminals, the subtropical shoreline now consists of a string of self-contained city-states populated by lizard men, the feline rakasta, and intelligent spiders. Vermeil has made everything a mess, tinting the plants, sky, and even the residents' skin a dull red. A thorough history provides insight into the region's brutal past. Intriguing locales abound. The Dream River, bordered by amber lotuses whose pollen induces sleep, runs from the canine kingdom of Renardy to the Plain of Dreams. The aranea, a race of devious arachnids, occupy Herath, the City of Mages. Sadly, there are no full-blown adventures, just a few outlines (though they're pretty good ones). And with so much territory to cover, we only get a—sigh—cursory peek at the various cultures.

But as in ***Masque of the Bed Death*** the setting is secondary to the rules. And the rules are a wacky delight. For instance, in addition to the usual humans and elves, player characters can be aranea, rakasta, lupins (dogheaded humanoids), or tortles (bipedal turtles). New character kits include the Gaucho and Webmaster. Virtually all intelligent creatures, PCs included, gain magical abilities called Legacies when they enter the area. Most characters get a single Legacy, though some, such as those taking the Inheritor character kit, may acquire several. Legacies resemble standard AD&D game spells, such as ***charm*** and ***fly*** usable at will, three times per day. But they have their drawbacks. As soon as a character gains a Legacy, he begins to lose up to 2d4 points from an ability score (chosen by the DM). He also begins to turn red and, worse, develop a physical deformity related to his Legacy; the ***armor*** Legacy, for example, might transform the affected character's skin to snake scales. These deformities may be avoided by wearing a cynnabryl amulet. Cynnabryl, however, goes dead at the rate of one ounce per week, ensuring a constant scramble for pristine ore.

Evaluation: Engrossing and nervy, Red Steel takes the AD&D game in a lot of unexpected directions, and I'm not just talking about fighters being able to blast ***magic missiles.*** The economics are different; consider the trade ramifications where cynnabryl is more precious than gold. The balance of power is different; how, for instance, does a ruler keep the peace in a community of self-absorbed spell-casters? Even the animals are different; it's possible to run into a werewolf with red fur or a spike-covered goblin. On the downside, Red Steel's emphasis on rules doesn't leave much room for the civilization. I wanted to know more about cynnabryl black marketeers, vermeil cultists, tortle armament merchants. Put it this way: if TSR offered to swap the CD for a Savage Coast source book, I'd Federal Express mine to them this afternoon. As it stands, Red ***Steel*** is a tantalizing introduction to an exciting world, one I hope TSR revisits soon.

Denver: The City of Shadows

SHADOWRUN* game supplement
One 168-page book, one 64-page book, one 22" X 34" map sheet, one 17" X 11" map sheet, two laminated travel passes, boxed
FASA Corporation $25
Design: Nigel D. Findley
Additional design: Bill Lenox, Tom Wong, and Tom Dowd
Development: Tom Dowd
Editing: Donna Ippolito
Illustrations: Joel Biske, Steve Bryant, Paul Daly, Earl Geier, Rick Harris, Jeff Laubenstein, Dan Smith, and Karl Waller
Cover: Dave McCoy and Jim Nelson

Denver, the most elaborate SHADOWRUN game supplement to date, examines the politically divided Treaty City in all its decadent glory. As he did in the Lone ***Star*** and ***Corporate Shadowfiles*** source books, designer Nigel Findley provides a running commentary in the form of computer chat from a gaggle of argumentative wise guys.

Bert: "And I hate it. It's intrusive and annoying, a bunch of mindless babble riddled with sophomoric slang like 'chummer' and 'frag you'."

Ernie: "Well, I love it. It's more fun to read than page after page of boring essays. And the slang adds flavor."

The player's book, the bigger of the two, contains information generally available to local residents. The GM's book discusses the region's history, key personalities, and secret organizations, and includes about 20 pages of new rules. The poster map shows a birds-eye-view of the city; a small color map details the various sectors.

Bert: "Okay, so it looks pretty. But as a referee's resource, Denver ***makes a good door stop. If you want to find a piece of hard data, you've got to sift through all that miserable 'chummer' babble."***

Ernie: "If you want to find a piece of hard data, use the index."

Findley employs a self-assured, conversational writing style, taking care to give each participant in the commentary a unique voice.

Bert: "Yeah, well, he should've employed some self-restraint while he was at it. Maybe that would've helped him avoid sentences like: 'More so than even in Berlin, these not-always-violent opportunities abound because the unique nature of the divided city allows no room for direct confrontation or open warfare."

Ernie: "This is a role-playing supplement, not a journalism textbook. How about all the neat places, like the Tender Fender Mender, an auto chop shop where you can get a missile rack installed on your T-bird?'

Also known as the Front Range Free Zone, Denver consists of six political sectors, each with its own laws and culture. Black market trade dominates the economies, making Denver a hotbed of corruption and ambiguous morality—in short, it's a typical SHADOWRUN city.

Bert: "Typical? I'd say 'generic.' You could rip random pages out of these books, stick 'em in other cyberpunk supplements, and never know the difference."

Ernie: "Like you couldn't say the same thing about most fantasy supplements. Besides, anyone who reads everything in the box will find plenty of cool stuff. How about the cops in Azzietown who use paranormal critters to sniff out drug smugglers? Or the Yakuza clan that controls the illegal chip market by training their own deckers to outmaneuver the Mafia?"

There are adventure hooks galore for those willing to dig them out, but no developed scenarios.

Ernie: "Who cares!?"

Evaluation: Despite its ambition, ***Denver*** is basically a water-treader, a look at a familiar setting from a different angle. And the quirky style sabotages its utility; it's a good read, but it's not much of a reference. Still, the SHADOWRUN game has no devotee more capable than Nigel Findley, who energizes even the dreariest

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material with wit and enthusiasm; if Findley were a chicken, he'd probably lay cybernetic eggs. Experienced players should find Denver irresistible—providing, of course, they're willing to navigate all the silly lingo.

Ernie: "Silly lingo? That's a lot of fraggin' drek! Your fraggin scope is flat, chummer, down and dark in the fraggin'—"

Bert: "Oh, shut up."

Short and sweet

Parlainth Adventures, by Teeuwyn, Robin D. Laws, Allen Varney, and Samuel Witt. FASA Corporation, $10.

A perfect companion to the ***Parlainth*** boxed set and an excellent introduction to the EARTHDAWN game, this collection of simple scenarios takes a party of newcomers on a memorable tour of enchanted labyrinths, creature-ridden catacombs, and similar AD&D game-ish locales. The designers, veterans all, offer lucid advice on setting the stage and troubleshooting unexpected situations. Despite a few humorous moments—adversaries called bog gobs, Allen Varney's tongue-in-cheek "Passion Box"—this isn't what you'd call light fantasy. The mind-wrenching abomination in "Threads" would be right at home in a CALL OF CTHULHU game. In "Blood Pact," there's a creep who can't speak because of all the gore bubbling from his multiple mouths. Bring your first-aid kit. (Note to the financially strapped: the ***Parlainth*** box, while helpful, is optional.)

Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure, by Jeff Grubb, Aaron Allston, and Thomas M. Reid. TSR, Inc., $30.

You're a newcomer to the AD&D game. You've played the FIRST QUEST™ game. You've read the ***Player's Handbook*** and understand about half of it. Now what? Well, you can 1) close your eyes, buy one of the zillion or so supplements, and hope for the best; 2) design your own adventures from scratch (good luck!); or 3) invest in the exquisite ***Karameikos*** campaign set. The 126-page ***Explorer's Guide,*** with lavish color illustrations throughout, covers all the basics in plain language. It explains the purpose of a campaign setting (" . . . a location in which a DM can place an AD&D game against a larger context"), how to use the maps ("Don't let the hexes throw you"), and a step-by-step procedure for creating PCs ("Take a blank sheet of paper . . . list the abilities down the left side . . ."). A 56-track compact disc (total time: 59:59) enlivens the ***Adventure Book*** scenarios with dialogue and sound effects. For instance, the DM plays Track #5 when the PCs attempt to smash their way into an abandoned building; a stalwart warrior yells, "Lend your shoulders and we'll break down the door! One! Two! Three!" followed by the sound of shattering wood (or is that crumbling bone?). If you're a beginner and ***Karameikos*** fails to make your heart race, you might as well go back to crossword puzzles.

The Star Wars Planet Collection, by Grant S. Boucher, Julie Boucher, Bill Smith, and John Terra. West End Games, $25.

This hefty volume compiles the three volumes of the ***Planets of the Galaxy*** series, updating them for West Ends Second Edition STAR WARS* game. The format remains the same: each of the more than two dozen settings begins with a summary of critical statistics (population, climate, tech levels), followed by a list of cultural highlights, key personalities, and oddball monsters (Orgons are sentient plants that communicate with sign language; the Gazaran resemble flying squirrels that operate steam engines). Hard science is about as pertinent here as it is in the AD&D game, but nobody plays the STAR WARS RPG for the physics lessons. As long as the West End-ers were fiddling with the original books, too bad they didn't improve the maps. Still, a good buy for new recruits.

Mekton Mecha Manual Volume One, by Benjamin Wright, Michael MacDonald, David Ackerman, and Derek Quintanar. R. Talsorian Games, $8.

In the battle of the giant robots, I give the edge to Palladium's ROBOTECH* game over R. Talsorian's MEKTON* game. Not only are the Palladium machines more formidable, the rich background makes the ROBOTECH setting a better bet for a long campaign, But for those who want to skip the preliminaries and get on with the destruction, the MEKTON game is an acceptable—and less demanding—alternative. The ***Mecha Manual*** provides complete stats for 24 high-tech nightmares, among them the VAH-A64 Switch Blade, the Air Gunner Fantam G8l, and the Merge-Griffin Godgriffin VX. The graphics are evocative, the historical summaries mercifully brief. Just one question: if the ***Mecha Manual*** uses rules from the forthcoming ***Mekton Zeta*** system, how come ***we*** got the ***Mecha Manual*** first?

Rogues in Lankhmar, by ***Wes*** Nicholson. TSR, Inc., $10.

Dungeon Masters who've enjoyed the previous volumes in the Lankhmar series (including ***Tales of.*** . . and ***Slayers of. . .)*** but still don't know how to get a campaign off the ground should appreciate the focused approach of the latest entry. A block of adventure hooks follows each guild, NPC, and location description, making it a snap for DMs to develop encounters geared to the interests of their players. The last chapter offers insightful tips for handling hard-to-please players. The result: sophisticated, intelligent role-playing for those more interested in negotiating treaties than scalping orcs.

The Unnaturals, by Sandy Addison, Dustin Browder, Bill Olmesdahl, and Ed Stark. West End Games, $15.

A source book with a sense of humor, this menagerie of creatures for the BLOODSHADOWS* game augments the expected assortment of ghosts and demons with water imps that live in the kitchen sink and face-shifters who read ***Better Homes and Glowstones*** magazine. That's not to say they're docile; water imps are prone to drown their landlords in the bathtub. Well-written and deftly illustrated—but where's the index?

RIFTS: MANHUNTER*, by Buck Shomo, with Matt Balent, Nora Boustead, Chris Cloyd, Kevin Kirsten, Dale Maple, Mike McCune, Meredith McGhan, Eric Nelson, Eric Nikkila, Dave Rumptz, Gary Sibley, Kevin Siembieda, and Eric Strebel. Myrmidon Press, $20.

In 1987, the small but spirited Kingslayer Publications put out the MANHUNTER* game, a science-fiction RPG sporting hairy-chested heroes and the meanest war machines this side of the ***Terminator*** films. Now, the MANHUNTER game has arisen as a supplement for Palladium's RIFTS* game, and everybody wins. MANHUNTER is no longer burdened with the formula-heavy rules that made it a chore to play. And the RIFTS Megaverse, top-heavy with sinister worlds like ***Wormwood*** and the ***Vampire Kingdoms,*** benefits from MANHUNTER's breezy space opera. The alien races are especially strong: the nondescript Aglians identify each other by the style of dress, the Qulaki produce septic blood that poisons their enemies. The copious technology section gives details on needle lasers, jolt maces, and pulse blasters. As for the Manhunters, they're superpowered robots with the dispositions of serial killers. The designers warn that "if the Manhunters ever meet and join forces with the Mechanoids (from the RIFTS supplement of the same name), the Megaverse could be in serious trouble." Sounds good to me! (Information: Myrmidon Press, PO. Box 1374, Royal Oak MI 48068.)

A former newspaper editor, Rick Swan has written for Writer's Digest, Video, ***and*** Wizard ***magazines. He also has published one sentence in*** Rolling Stone ***magazine. You can write to him at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.***

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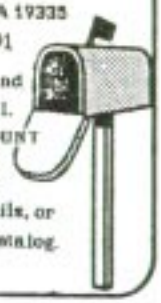

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TITAN LEGIONS* game (Games Workshop)

From the Forge

Science Fiction has changed a lot since journeys to the earth's core and home-made time machines. If Jules Verne were alive today he would be staggered by the wealth and depth of our science fiction. (That, and a lot of Geriatric specialists would want to take a look at him.)

In Verne's day, science fiction was considered frivolous by many of his literary peers. Nowadays, names like Asimov, Bradbury, and Heinlein are respected throughout known space. Sure, we've suffered through our share of *Lost in **Space*** and ***Spaceballs,*** but we've also been treated to the likes of ***Star Wars, Star Trek*** (in all its incarnations), and more recently, the film Stargate.

The technological advances evident in much of our fiction boggles the mind and continues Jules' tradition of imagination and creation. Writers explain these advances with a line of techno-babble, but who really cares about the explanation? It's the environment and genre that intrigue us, and the hi-tech equipment is an important part of all that. Who would have watched Star ***Wars*** if the heroes carried .38's and stilettos instead of blasters and lightsabers?

It's hardly surprising that our games have been influenced by SF books, movies, and TV shows. As a futuristic escape from our mundane, civilized world in which politically correct countries war only over such important issues as race and religion, they allow us to step into enlightened futures, or nightmares, through the theater of the mind.

Futuristic games also give us an excuse to acquire some really cool figures! Great miniatures sculptors labor tirelessly on incredible lines of SF figures in support of our games, and some of those appear in the following pages. Thanks to Alexander Bond of "The Master's Touch" in Los Angeles for painting some of these review figures.

Next time, we will focus on supernatural and magical creatures. If you have questions or comments, write: *From The Forge,* PO. Box 9, Murrieta CA 92562.

Reviews

Games Workshop

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Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#0353 TITAN LEGIONS* game
Epic games series
Designer: Andy Chambers
Scale: Epic (6 mm) cost: $59.99
Presentation: 10 Playability: 9
Value: 7

The latest addition to Games Workshop's addictive Epic games line, TITAN LEGIONS

Explanation of Ratings
1 Slag, a good doorstop
2 Poor, for die-hards only
3 Well below average, needs work
4 Below average, but salvageable
5 Standard, average quality
6 Good, definitely worth your perusal
7 Great, have you seen this yet?
8 Excellent, you have to see this!
9 Incredible, where can I get one?
10 No mortal hands produced this!

finally brings the Mega-Gargant and Imperator Titan to the field of battle. With the earth shaking and guns blazing, these machines of destruction will forever change the face of the epic-scale games.

From game box to rules to game templates, the TITAN LEGIONS set is thick with high-quality artwork, photography, and technical illustrations. In addition to the various books (there are three books including the rule book, the ***Codex Titanicus Imperial*** book, and the ***Fires of Gehenna*** scenario booklet), the game has 10 highly stylized card building (some Orc, some Imperial), numerous cards, counters, and weapon effect templates. As mentioned, the Imperator Titan makes its first appearance along with two Mega-Gargants, **12** Orc Bonebreaka tanks, and 10 Imperial Knight Paladins.

The rule book tucks the TITAN LEGIONS game into the other science-fiction Epic game, SPACE MARINE* very well. There are no visible contradictions, which was the primary problem with the integration of the original ADEPTUS TITANICUS* (an incredible game) and the first edition of SPACE MARINE (which turned ADEPTUS into a patchwork quilt of contradictory, even paradoxical rules). I see no signs of paradox overload here.

While the possibility of an unstoppable force of Imperators or Mega-Gargants exists, the rules give these monstrosities of mayhem the necessary Achilles' heels. In addition to a high cost, either or both may be boarded, and both have limitations on their firepower. While the Orcs are at a definite disadvantage, with their lack of organizational skills and rudimentary command and control chains, they also are less costly to field in larger forces which, hopefully, will compensate.

The rule book contains experience rules for titan crews and the Codex book gives us a glimpse into the dark recesses of the Imperium with more highly detailed background.

The plastic models require significant assembly, but GW has provided instructions that allow even a novice to put them together with ease. I would suggest that the models be trimmed, prepped, and painted prior to assembly, as they become more difficult to paint after assembly.

Overall, I'd have to say that the TITAN LEGIONS game is Games Workshop's best release since the WARHAMMER 40K* game. While the price tag is high, you get about $40 worth of plastic models so the rules, templates, counters, and scenarios are a deal.

#0155 Codex Eldar
#0156 Codex Orks
Authors: Rick Priestley/Jervis Johnson
Scale: 28 mm cost: $20.00
Presentation: **10** Playability: 9
Value: 6

Details and background information for WARHAMMER 40K Eldar and Orks abound in these Codex books. Both are presented with stunning color and copious amounts of the incredible artwork that Games Workshop has become known for.

Codex Eldar provides information on the origins of the various Aspects, Harlequin, and the psychic powers at which the Eldar are so adept. Further details include Warlocks, Farseers, scouts, pirates, and their spirit-driven machines of destruction. A full-color insert gives some paint schemes for your Eldar troops as well as force cards and additional wargear cards.

Explanations of all the Eldar weaponry, fully pointed troop lists, and a selection of special characters complete the book.

Codex Orks, focusing on the true power of the universe (can you tell which army I run?), details the various Ork clans, their strange (and sometimes functional) weapons of destruction, and troop types from Kommandos to Warpheads. The color section gives color schemes and additional wargear cards that are race specific.

The army list, with appropriate point cost information, numerous special characters, and some Ork tactics put the finishing touches on the Codex. The armies are well balanced, even with Psyker rules that are different for each race. One of the great things about the 40K game is that the races are so distinctive and detailed, they don't blend together in the rules or on the table-top.

Zodgrod Wortsnagga (Games Workshop) Jain Zar (Games Workshop)
Maugan Ra (Games Workshop)

#9102 Zodgrod Wortsnagga
#8082 Jain Zar
#8082 Maugan Ra
WARHAMMER 40K* line
Sculptors: Alan Perry/Jes Goodwin
Scale: 28 mm Cost: $7.99 each
Technical: 8 Artistic: 9
Value: 5

Three powerful leaders for the WARHAMMER 40K game, Zodgrod is a formidable special character from the ***Codex Orks*** while Jain Zar and Maugan Ra are Phoenix Lords from ***Codex Eldar.***

Zodgrod and Jain Zar are very clean casts with only the slightest of parting lines. The only visible line on Jain Zar was inside the curl of her loincloth. Maugan Ra has a slight line across his head and shoulders. All three require a minimal amount of assembly.

Zodgrod is a masterpiece of rough detail work, from cloth wrapped feet to kustom bolter to mechanical Runtherd Grabba-Stikk. When going into battle he leads his specially trained super snotlings.

One of the most elegant pieces I've seen in a while, Jain Zar is detailed to highlight her graceful curves and sharp lines. Many of the proportions and dimensions have been exaggerated in a stylized way, such as the hair, the knee-high boots, and the length of her feet.

Maugan Ra, the last of his craftworld, is hideously attired for his role on the battlefield. With mechanical support for his heavy weapon, highly stylized armor and shoulder pads, and a backpack apparently built of vertebrae, his presence wouldn't be missed at most parties.

The price is noticeably high for a single figure, but these are far from standard fare. Considering the beauty and charisma of these figures (can I use "charisma" when referring to an ork?), I have to admit that they're worth the price tag of $7.99 apiece. ***Painting by Ken Carpenter***

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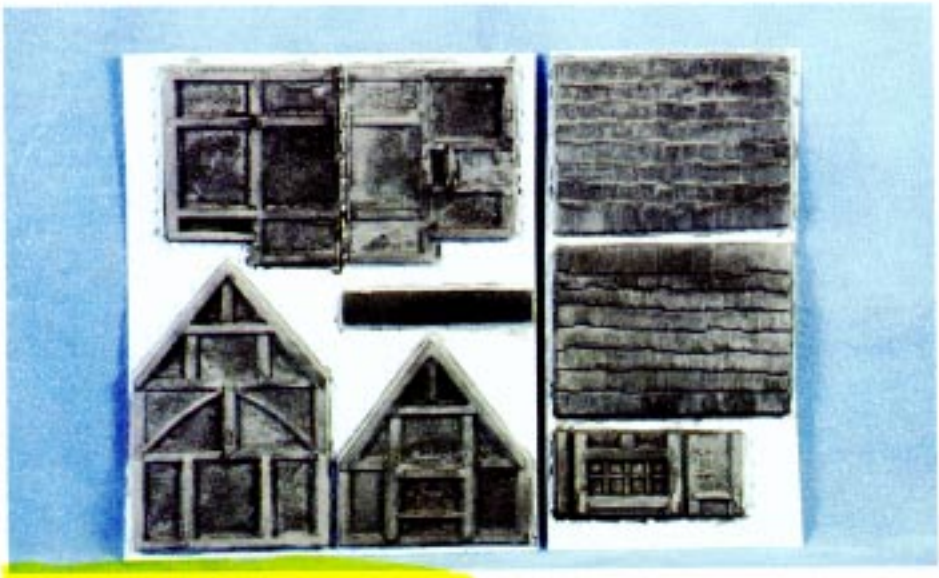
#2101 Tudor Inn
Wild Walls series
Scale: 25 mm Cost: $6.00
Technical: 5 Artistic: 7
Value: 7

I just happened to run into this strange lot of science-fiction fanatics in the miniatures room at the GEN CON® Game Fair. They were surrounded with all sorts of SF paraphernalia and some really extravagant



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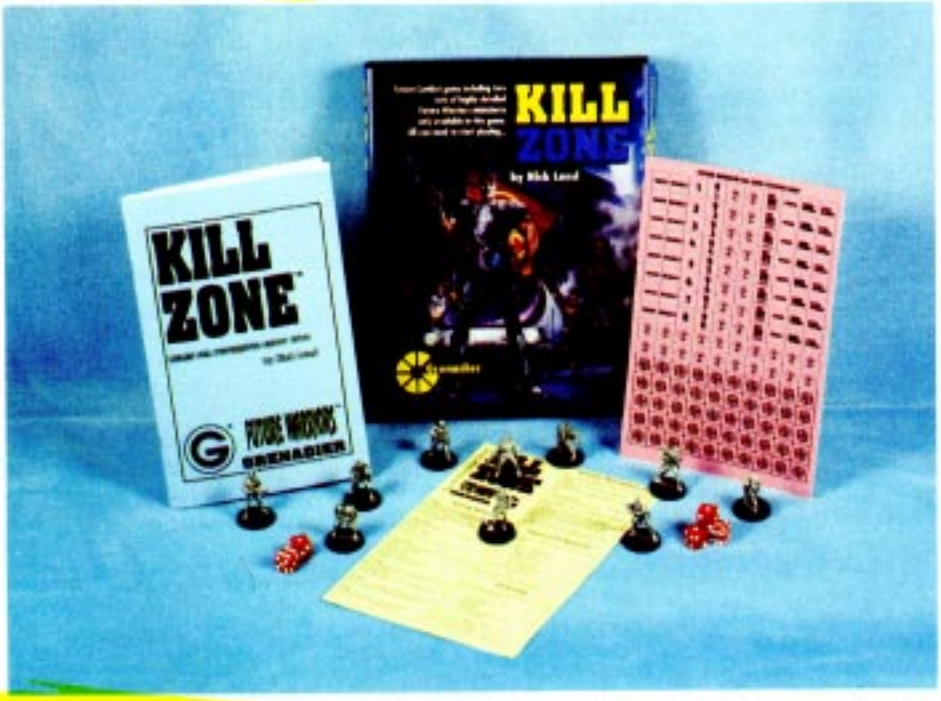

Kill Zone (Grenadier)

dioramas. Turns out they make VACU-form walls and structures.

While, as their name implies, they make a lot of SF settings, they also make some dungeon, castle, and medieval village sets. This Tudor Inn is an excellent example of their village sets.

As I mentioned, these are made of plastic sheets that have been formed to a desired shape. They won't hold up to a lot of rough treatment, but a little care will preserve them for . . . what's the half-life of plastic? About eight millennia?

For the material and price, the level of detail is very good. The inside of the mold is actually more detailed, because of the nature of VACU-form, but much of it comes through. The inn has a shake roof, plus daub and wattle exterior with heavy beams to reinforce it at certain points. Instructions detail the necessary trimming and priming before you paint.

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#1575 Kill Zone game

FUTURE WARRIORS* line
Author: Nick Lund
Scale: 25 mm Cost: $24.95
Presentation: 7 Playability: 9
Value: 9

For months we've been seeing the FUTURE WARRIORS blisters, hoping that a game system for them was just around the corner. Well it's here, and you're going to love it.

Coming in a full-color sleeve, the boxed set boasts 10 of the incredible figures we've come to expect from this line, including five that are sold only with the game. The booklet is pretty plain, but the rules are what's important. There is also a sheet of counters and a Quick Reference sheet.

While the figures are reminiscent of the ***Mad Max*** setting, the game itself doesn't capitalize on the potential background as yet. However, the feel is different from any miniatures game you've ever played. Movement and firing is based on orders you assign at the end of the previous turn, so you have to count on calculated risk and gut instinct to survive. This method creates a tension and you-against-the-world feel, living up to the by-line "Rules for Futuristic Shoot Outs."

Mechanics are pretty simple and require only six-sided dice. Hand-to-hand combat is an original system that's both fast and deadly. Ranged combat is quick, but the game gives the defender (target) the benefit of the doubt. In a game designed for only a dozen or so models on each side, leaning toward the defender allows the game to last longer than 15 minutes.

I have to admit, I was a fan before the game came out because I was so intrigued by the figures, but the game was worth the wait. There's supposed to be a scenario booklet out this quarter, so look around for it.

#1524 Satellite Team
#1530 Rebel Women

FUTURE WARRIORS* line
Sculptor: Mark Copplestone
Scale: 28 mm Cost: $ 4.00 each
Technical: 7 Artistic: 8
Value: 8

Now that we've got the game, let's look at more of the great figures that have been released for it. These two blisters provide more troopers and rebels, not that you'd invite them both to the same party.

Minor parting lines can be found along the legs and arms, but they should clean up easily. A tiny amount of sheeting lies in the crook of the satellite controller's left arm—an easy fix for hobby knife and file.

The troopers are heavily embellished with armor studs, buckles, pockets, utility belts, and other gizmos. They also are equipped with military assault rifles (the kind you always see on the news), sidearms, and communications headsets. With the satellite team comes a small satellite communications station.

The rebel women have boots, heavy pants, assault weaponry, and other assorted details. All of the figures have excellent features and realistic expressions, allowing for incredible results with the right paint job. ***Painting*** by ***Ken Carpenter***

Global Games

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#1780 Mark III Assault Fiend
#1790 C2 Centurion
LEGIONS OF STEEL* line
Sculptor: Dave Summers
Scale: 28mm Cost: $12.95 each
Technical: 5 Artistic: 9
Value: 6

Satellite Team (Grenadier)

Mark III Assault Fiend (Global Games)

Incredibly ambitious figures, both the Mark III and Centurion were designed by Tom Frank and sculpted by Dave Summers. These beasts of electronics and metal will terrorize your LEGIONS OF STEEL game players! The Mark III is a huge, metal piece weighing in at nearly a 1/4 pound, and one of the most powerful predators in the game, while the Centurion's level of detail is unreal.

There are visible parting lines and areas of flash, but clean-up isn't too bad. Assembly is required, but the sculptor was careful to make sure the pieces fit well and assemble easily. A little fit work will be required to get the Mark III's lower-right hand cradled in its left hand. On the Centurion's right shoulder are two miniature demons, but their feet didn't fill all the way. A small bit of putty work will rectify that.

Previous Assault Fiends have been impressive, but the Mark III is incredible. Four armed miniatures often look awkward and clumsy, but this piece is well proportioned and built to minimize the customary strangeness. Its head is creatively sculpted with a mix of smooth curves and sharp angles. An action stance gives the figure great motion and life while the detail of his weapons, torso, and limbs will satisfy the most demanding of miniatures fanatics.

Centurions are vicious predators with

War Leader (Global Games)

the intellect to command larger units of lesser machines. Highly stylized sculpting and fine detail make this model a centerpiece of your LOS forces. The "armor" and weapons are very well done, as are the torso and face. The "spear" is actually a very effective area of effect weapon given a spear shape to allow greater casting distance. This is also the first LOS model to use the Heavy Deadbolt or Blitzer, another surprise for your overconfident UNE rivals.

LOS players will want the Mark III and Centurion models so they can mop up those UNE troops, but painters, modelers, and collectors will want them because they're such great figures. *Painting by Ken Carpenter*

#3421 War Leader in Diamond PBA
#3440 Volcano B.A.P.
LEGIONS OF STEEL line
Sculptor: Dave Summers
Scale: 28 mm cost: $4.95/$12.95
Technical: 6 Artistic: 7
Value: 5

Among the leading releases for the Infranite race, these figures are a couple of the race's most able fighters.

Both show minor parting lines, and there are a few small areas of flash or heavy vent threads, but the size of the Volcano required that the figure have adequate flow of metal through the channels. Clean up isn't too bad, and the figures look great when you're done.

The War Leader, with Tempest assault rifle, grenade launcher, rocket pod, and grenades, is a formidable command figure, and one of the best unit leaders in the game. The detail of his powered battle armor is good, especially the pack and mid-section. His rifle and shoulder mounted rocket pod also are highly detailed.

Volcanos are an ominous sight on the battlefield. With high-powered weaponry, only a strong force can stand up to one. Detail includes organic-looking tentacles and texture over the torso while the rest is very well sculpted, powered machinery. The figure stands about two inches tall and weighs in at about 1/4 pound.

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#1690 BattleTech Compendium
BATTLETECH* series
Scale: 1/285th cost: $20.00
Presentation: 9 Playability: 10
Value: 9

The most recent revision to the classic BATTLETECH miniatures game, "The Rules of Warfare" clears up the last few questions within the greatest rules system of its kind.

Replete with good to excellent artwork and compelling background material, the newest Compendium involves you in the life and death struggle of the Inner Sphere. Two sections of full-cover, glossy pages present incredible computer graphics of 'mechs in action as well as the BATTLETECH Miniatures Conversion rules, written by Bryan LiBrandi and Chuck Crane.

Some of the more important rules clarifications address standing (and falling), multiple piloting skill rolls in a single phase, transferring damage, and others. The clarifications don't seem to change many of these rules so much as spell them out in a clear and concise way.

The BATTLETECH game, from the very beginning, was an absorbing game but the incredible history and time-line that FASA has created, with the help of writers like Michael A. Stackpole, turned a great game into an epic, living universe. The BATTLETECH game is a must-play miniatures game for beginners and experts alike.

#1685 Tukayyid Scenario Pack
BATTLETECH series
Author: Jeffrey Layton
Scale: 1/285th cost: $12.00
Presentation: 8 Playability: 9
Value: 8

The Tukayyid Scenario Pack allows you to play through some of the historic confrontations of the battle for Tukayyid, as either the Com Guard forces or one of the many Clans that participated in the battle.

Art throughout the book ranges from

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merely adequate to exceptional. However, couching the scenarios in the storyline of Tukayyid, detailing each Clan's success or folly as well as the Com Guard response, drags you, willing or not, into the plot and makes you want to play it out—right now.

Most of the scenarios are fairly balanced and designed to allow either or both sides to claim some margin of victory, dependant upon the outcome. Those battles that appear to be somewhat lopsided depend on a quick wit and a strict adherence to the mission's objective to allow players to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Included are 27 scenarios, background material on the confrontations, special rules to help you create forces, and numerous 'mech sheets for special configurations or newer designs. Tukayyid will keep you fighting it out for nearly as long as the actual battle lasted!

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#20-616 Grand Titan TIT-N10M
#20-617 Tempest TMP-3M
BATTLETECH line
Sculptors: Jeff Wilhelm / Dave Summers
Scale: 1/285th Cost: $7.25 / $6.00
Technical: 5 Artistic: 8
Value: 6

Two of the Inner Sphere's latest answers to the clans, the Grand Titan is a combat monster and the Tempest is a fine balance of offense and defense. Both figures do their designs justice.

While parting lines are minimal and well placed, there is a small pitting problem on the Grand Titan. Traces of pitting are visible on the back of the torso and along the left leg. The pitting is slight, but it is visible and will have to be dealt with before painting. The Tempest needs some attention to the midsection, but it cleans up well.

Nearly identical to the design drawing in FASA's 3055 ***Technical Readout,*** the Grand Titan figure is well done. It comes in five pieces so some assembly is required, but that can be accomplished in no time at all.

The potential damage this 'mech can dish out is in the high seventies, but the 'mech has a heat problem if you approach half that. The notes in the 3055 ***Technical Readout*** say it beat an Atlas, but it must have been a 3025 Atlas because a 3050 Atlas would have cleaned the Titan's clock. Replacing the Titan's standard heatsinks with doubles, however, will make it one of the toughest kids on the block and it should have critical slots to spare.

In gaming terms, the Tempest is a highly versatile 'mech, armed with a gauss rifle, a large pulse, three medium lasers, and an SRM 6. Armor is pretty much maxed out and it's got average maneuverability for a 65-ton mech (4/6/4).

Aside from packing a solid gaming punch, the Tempest is a model of sharp lines, crisp detail, and exacting design. Painting will be a pleasure, though you need to expect a good deal of detail work to bring out all of the highlights. ***Painting by Alexander Bond***

#20-537 Minotaur & Satyr
#20-574 Shamans (M & F)
SHADOWRUN* line
Sculptor: Jim Johnson / Dave Summers
Scale: 25 mm Cost: $6.00 / $4.00
Technical: 7 Artistic: 8
Value: 8

Ral Partha's SHADOWRUN always has been incredible, but it seems that they really want to startle the consumer with some of their latest releases.

Parting lines are visible along all four legs of the Minotaur, as well as the arms and horns of the Satyr. Slight mold lines are also visible along the axis of the shaman figures. While the lines are minor, a little time will be required to remove them.

The Satyr is rather traditional, though very well done. It boasts furred legs and hairy mane that are both highly detailed, and Jim has spared us the stereotypical genitalia (thank you!). Definitely not stere-

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Minotaur & Satyr (Ral Partha) Shamans (Ral Partha)

Mortificator & Inquisitor (Heartbreaker) Centurion & Legionnaire (Heartbreaker)

otypical, the Minotaur is quite the eye catcher. With a bovine head that has vaguely humanoid features, a heavy mane, and the oddly muscled, fur-patched body of a bull, this figure is a piece of art. Both figures have life-like stances and great proportions.

Dave's shamans also are incredibly proportioned and poised for action, but the detail here is different. While the beasts were sculptures of muscle and feature, the shamans appear in ceremonial garb that has been detailed to the finest article of clothing and accessory.

The male has a medicine pouch, bandoliers, tasseled shoulder pads, and a leather holster. Feathers adorn his wild hair and his knee-high moccasins appear mismatched. The female wears a long coat with padded mantles over her shoulders. The coat is open, revealing a short, tasseled top that exposes her midriff, chains about her thighs, and knee-high moccasins.

The female seems about to thrust her dagger into a doll charm. I'm sure the doll's uncanny resemblance to myself is just a coincidence, although I have had this shooting pain. ***Painting by Ken Carpenter***

Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

1260 E. Woodland Ave.
Springfield PA 19064
Voice: (215) 544-9052 Fax: (215) 544-9052
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#8107 Mortificator & Inquisitor
#8116 Centurion & Legionnaire
MUTANT CHRONICLES* line
Sculptors: Tim Prow/Kev Adams
Scale: 28 mm Cost: $3.95 each
Technical: 8 Artistic: 7
Value: 8

For use with the MUTANT CHRONICLES role-playing game or any of the Heartbreaker board games based on it, these figures give you a feel for the game.

Nothing worse than slight mold lines show on any of these four figures, so a minimal amount of filing should get you to the primer stage.

Centurions and Legionnaires are part of the Dark Legion forces that conspire to dominate or destroy mankind, slaves to the powers of the Dark Symmetry. Inquisitors and Mortificators are members of the Brotherhood, a quasi-religious organization dedicated to the destruction of the Dark Legion, wherever it may be found—even within the ranks of humanity.

The figures are very stylish, fitting the mood and grit of the MUTANT CHRONICLES universe. The sculpting is very good, especially on the Centurion and Mortificator, with incredible amounts of minute detail on armor, helmets, and countless accessories. Painting ***by Ken Carpenter***

Ground Zero Games

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#THRUST Full Thrust game 2nd edition)
Author: Jon Tuffley
Scale: 1/2000th Cost: $16.00
Presentation: 7 Playability: 8
Value: 8

The FULL THRUST game is a table-top miniatures system for "fleet actions in deep space." The author's approach, a generic ship-to-ship combat system that could stand on its own or be used with other game systems, is excellent. The author regularly reminds the reader that he FULL THRUST system is presented as a base from which GMs and players can build, modify, or develop their own material. It's also written in a personable, easy to understand format.

Despite its small company origin, the book boasts a full-color cover and plenty of interior art, which ranges from adequate to excellent. The organization is well thought out, so the reader can follow the logical progression of the game.

Lightning fast mechanics use a single die roll to determine if a weapon system hits and damages the target. With such a combat system you can have dozens of ships in the battle and still complete a battle before the turn of the century. Maneuvering is handled simply but efficiently, and allows for the frictionless nature of space (ships continue to move along a vector until thrust is applied to change speed or turn). Since movement orders are written before being performed, players can't react to their opponent's movement, simulating a combat situation where enemies attempt to anticipate each other's next move or react to the last one.

In addition to the ship-to-ship combat (ships being large vessels with FTL capability), there are rules for one- and two-man fighter craft that operate in units of six. The fighters are only capable of in-system propulsion but can prove quite an effective attack against the larger, less agile ships.

The FULL THRUST game is simple enough that beginners can learn the basics of miniatures gaming, but it also can be complex enough to interest and entertain

the most experienced table-top gamer. This is a great space combat simulation in simple game terms that opens up options that aren't available unless you're playing a table-top game. It plays fast and is a whole lot of fun.

#MORET More Thrust
Editor: Jon Tuffley
Scale: 1/2000th cost: ***$12.00***
Presentation: ***7*** Playability: 9
Value: 8

A supplement for the FULL THRUST rules, ***More Thrust*** provides more options, more power, and more fun. Using the same format as its parent system, the book is easy to understand and entertaining to read.

More Thrust presents expanded rules for fighters, giving specialized function fighters and elite/raw pilot modifiers. There also are optional rules to limit the effectiveness of fighters, restricting a potential imbalance, since a player using a lot of fighters could gain an advantage.

Additional rules for stationary installations, sensors, and planetary bodies expand rules to add more flavor and a greater sense of realism to the game. A couple of alien races make their appearance, as GZG provides an environment for those players who wish to use it. With the races come new weapons, hulls, and philosophies. The book includes three scenarios, numerous scenario ideas and rules for combining the FULL THRUST rules with a couple ground combat games. If you like FULL THRUST, then ***More Thrust*** is a must. (No Dr. Seuss-like poetry intended).

Best of Show

Gamer's BoS has been narrowed to two figures—Games Workshop's Jain Zar for the 40K game and Global Games' Centurion for the LEGIONS OF STEEL game. Jain Zar is a sleek, elegant piece of work with as much grace as you can pack into a 28-mm miniature. The Centurion is the ultimate example of extreme detailing. Every surface, nook, and angle has been intricately carved and fashioned to make this a startling figure for ambitious painters.

Modeler's BoS has to be Global's Mark III Assault Fiend. There wasn't much competition this time, but this one would stand out in any crowd. The Mark III has an overwhelming presence, either on the battlefield or on display.

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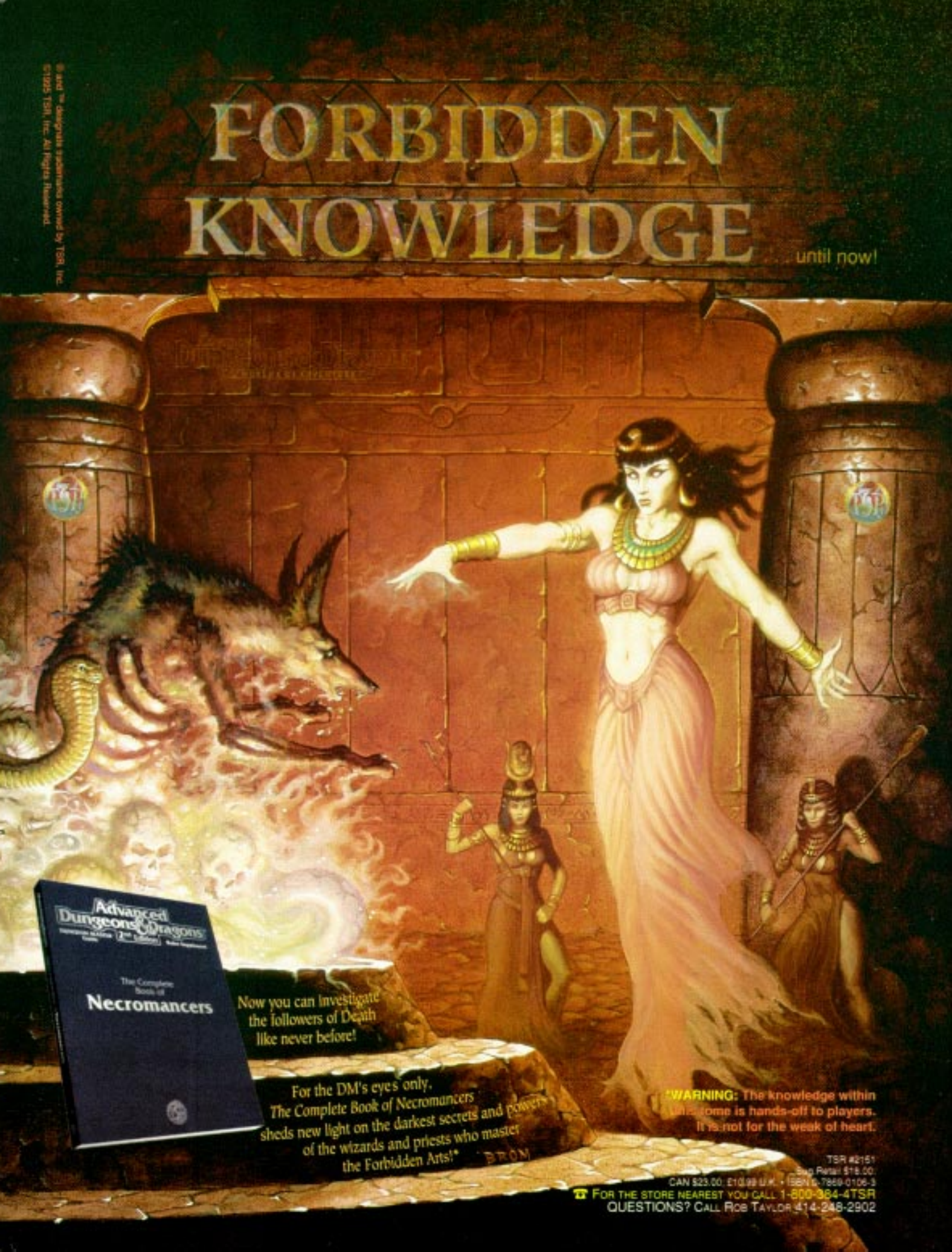

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